

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: John Meatoga

John Meatoga was born on May 3, 1926 in Kahuku. His parents, Muelu and Penina Meatoga, emigrated from Samoa in 1924 as missionaries for the Latter-Day Saints Church of Jesus Christ.

Except for a short time during the depression, Meatoga was raised in Lā'ie. He attended Lā'ie Elementary School and Kahuku Intermediate and High School.

Meatoga was fifteen when war broke out. In Hau'ula, he saw Japanese planes as they headed toward Bellows Field and Kāne'ohe Naval Air Station. He also remembers the military setting up barbed wire along the beaches that same day.

Meatoga quit school on his sixteenth birthday to work at various defense sites. They included the Lā'ie Quarry, Marconi Wireless Station at Kahuku Airfield, Mokulē'ia, Punahou School headquarters of the U.S. Engineer Department, Melim Service and Supply Company military car wash, and Kāne'ohe Naval Air Station.

In March of 1945 he was drafted into the army and went to Texas for basic training. The war ended while Meatoga was on a ship in the Pacific. One of his postwar jobs was to pick up Japanese stragglers in the Philippines. Meatoga made the military his career, retiring in 1972.

In 1960, while stationed in Idaho, Meatoga earned his high school general equivalency diploma. He enrolled in Kapi'olani Community College and received his associate in science degree in hotel mid-management in 1977. He went back to work at Barber's Point in 1979 and retired from civil service after nine years.

He and his wife, Amelia Bargau Meatoga, were married in 1955. They have one son.

Tape No. 22-45-1-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

John Meatoga (JM)

July 31, 1992

Makakilo, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. John Meatoga, on July 31, 1992, at his home in Makakilo, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Meatoga, why don't we start. First tell me when you were born and where you were born.

JM: Okay, I was born May the third, 1926, Kahuku Hospital.

WN: So you grew up where?

JM: Lā'ie. Lā'ie is my hometown.

WN: So how did you---what were your parents doing in Lā'ie?

JM: My parents, well, they were the, you might say, front runners of the Latter-Day Saints Church of Jesus Christ. The lead group that came from Samoa, arrived from Samoa November 1924. I don't know what year they were converted to become Mormons, but I do know that (it was) their mission to come ahead and make preparations for the Samoans to come later.

WN: Do you know about how many came?

JM: Must have been about eight, ten families. [Fay C. Alailima, who wrote an article entitled "The Samoans in Hawai'i," in *Social Processes in Hawai'i*, vol.29, 1982, pp.105-12, states that five Samoan families arrived in Lā'ie in 1923 to work for the Mormon Church.] But I don't know how many children there were. I do know about my family, there was my brother and two sisters when they came. They were ten, eight, and six [years old]. The oldest was my sister, Felila, she was ten years old, and my brother [Pa'ne] was eight, and my sister [Anovale] was six. And I was born two years later [1926] in Lā'ie, my hometown.

WN: So actually then your parents came as missionaries?

JM: Yes. And also to work in the [Latter-Day Saints] temple which they eventually did.

WN: So they came to stay?

JM: Oh yeah, definitely they came to stay. Yeah. As I was growing up I went to elementary school, Lā'ie, eventually ending up in Kahuku. Kahuku at that time was elementary and high school. Now it is Kahuku intermediate and high school [i.e., Kahuku High and Intermediate School].

WN: So the Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints] supplied your family with housing?

JM: Yes, supplied the family with housing and a lot. A piece of land and you do whatever you want. Well, we were fortunate we got 20,000 square feet. (Chuckles) I found that out later. Yeah, we had 20,000 square feet, and we were not the only ones, some people had more than that. And it depend on the size of the family, I guess, you know. Eventually my mom and dad gave about 7,000, I think, to their granddaughter, my niece, my oldest sister's daughter.

WN: The other families that came, were they related at all?

JM: One of the families, one or two, I think, we were related. I know one of the families we were related to was the Taualiis. We were related to them. That's my mother's aunt, technically speaking, according to the American system as to grandparents and aunts and cousins. And that's the only---oh, there were two other and they were these two brothers, Fanene. Ailama and Tom. They were our blood relation also. About third or second cousin. That's all I can remember. The Fonoimoana family, I think they were part of the group, Lolotai [family], Anae, with an e. A-N . . .

WN: Oh, Anae, Famika Anae's family . . .

JM: Yeah, that's it. The Samoan pronounce Anae with the e. That's right, Famika Anae. And there's---oh what's the other name?

WN: You told me last time, Maiava.

JM: Maiava also, yeah.

WN: Is that the wrestling family?

JM: Yeah, mm hmm, Neff.

WN: Yeah, Neff, mm hmm. Let's see, Leota?

JM: And Leota. Leota arrived three years before us. He arrived, well, in 1921.

WN: Oh, before you folks.

JM: Oh yeah. I think they were the first one, yeah. I'm pretty sure they came in 1921. They did not come with the others, according to my sister. And who's the other family? Tanoai, that's the name . . .

WN: Tanoai.

JM: Tanoai, yeah. T-A-N-O . . .

WN: A-I.

JM: Yeah, Tanoai.

WN: And was the Harringtons part of that group?

JM: I can't recall. I believe the Harringtons came before us. Well, not too much. See, I can't recall when Grandma Kennison came to Lā'ie, 'cause Harrington is also the offspring of the Kennison.

WN: Kennison.

JM: Yeah. Packard Harrington's grandfather was a former commander in the [U.S.] Navy, aboard a heavy cruiser, oh I forgot the name. And his name was Frederick Kennison. So, any Kennison you see in the telephone book—you not going to see too many. Maybe you probably won't see any, period. But if you do see one Kennison, there's a possibility that he's either from California or from here. Anyhow, Grandma Kennison put us up, in fact for a while, while we were waiting. I'm kind of getting ahead of the game now. I was born 1926, and as I grew up and the other Samoan kids came up and they were born. Neff [Maiava] came here when he was two years old. I believe he's three years older than I am. So anyway . . .

WN: Neff was born in Samoa?

JM: He was born in Samoa. But the rest of the clan was born here. His older sister also was born in Samoa.

WN: Everybody came from American Samoa?

JM: Uh, yes.

WN: Nobody from Western Samoa?

JM: Well, actually, we didn't have Western Samoa at that time. We called that British Samoa. My dad grew up in British Samoa, what is now called Western. [In 1914, Western Samoa became a New Zealand mandate, after fifteen years of German rule. The country became fully independent in 1962.] 'Cause the British [New Zealand] gave the Samoans back their independence and that's why they call 'em Western Samoa now, see. But at that time it was two—American and British [New Zealand]. Yeah. 'Upolu is [an island in] Western Samoa, and at that time, used to be under British [New Zealand] domain. That's why if you notice, there are some Samoan names in these Hawaiian islands. Well, because the Samoans came. And some of them settled here. That's how we got some places, like 'Upolu, on the Big Island.

WN: Oh, 'Upolu Point.

JM: That's right. Anyway, going back to Lā'ie now. Other [family] names were, Salanoa. Another name was Uale. U-A-L-E.

WN: How about the Broad family?



JM: And also the Broads. Well, the Broads were there before us. Not only the Broads, there were the Forsythes.

WN: Forsythe.

JM: See, Forsythe married---this is Wallace Forsythe, we have to specify Wallace because he had other brothers. But he did not marry a Samoan gal. She was of Swedish extract and Samoan. Hilda. Oh man, I thought she was *Haole*, boy. Tall and all, yeah. She used to work as a postmistress. I guess she helped her father-in-law, when Mr. Forsythe was still alive.

WN: So all these people that were related came because of the Mormon church?

JM: Because of the church, yeah.

WN: Had nothing to do with the military?

JM: No, no, because they came in the twenties, that's why, see. [In 1950, Samoan servicemen in the U.S. Navy and their families began arriving in Hawai'i.] Let me think, there are some more names, goodness gracious, oh boy ain't like it used to be, *bruddah*. (WN laughs) Of course, see, Fanene, my two cousins, they were single men at that time. And there was a *hānai* brother, Lulago Faefae. He eventually married a Hawaiian gal. That's another *hānai* brother. He was the only one, and bless his soul, he's left us already. He died in Independence, Missouri.

WN: So anyway, we can get some names later. Tell me something about growing up in Lā'ie. What was it like?

JM: Well, growing up in Lā'ie was---I don't recall if there were swings in Lā'ie. But we didn't care too much for the swing. And that was the only thing in the school at that time, was the swing and maybe that, what do you call, that seesaw?

WN: Yeah.

JM: Yeah, you go on the end of the board and you go up and down. Our sports were all in the mountain, the majority. The only sport we played at home, supposed to be polo, with the stick. The stick was a branch. Came out from the koa plant. And at the stump we look for one that come like this, see.

WN: L-shaped.

JM: Yeah, almost like an L-shape.

WN: Oh, like a hockey stick.

JM: Yeah, hockey stick. And we used a tennis ball to play, 'cause we no more protection. You better believe it, boy, before the game is over there's a whole bunch of fights going on.

(Laughter)

JM: I was fortunate, because I was fast. Me and my cousin, we always on the same team. I make

sure, you know, when we choose, eh, *janken a pō*. I always make sure that my cousin and I on the same side. 'Cause we had the Samoans from further in the town, and we had the Samoans on the Hau'ula side of the town, see. And most of the time, the guys on the Hau'ula side of Lā'ie, these the guys win, you know. Barefoot . . .

WN: Why, how do you know that?

JM: Because we faster.

WN: You guys were the Hau'ula side?

JM: In Lā'ie, Lā'ie was divided in two. We got one group down, we would call them the southwest team. And we are called the northeast team. (Laughs) And most time we win most of the games, you know. Sometimes we crook (laughs) we run and cheat, you know. You know, when we were growing up, it was a bad word to say shut up. And that was the only word we dare not say. We didn't even know all the other words. And another word was damn. We might say it among ourselves. But never at home or never any place in public, no. We weren't brainwashed, it's just we had no reason to use those kinds of words, especially profanity. There was hardly any profanity. The only time we had profanity was when one of the drunks in the town, you know. We had quite a few, I think we had about two or three. Oh boy, they drink their *'ōkolehao* man, and that's all. And I mean homemade brew. That's when we hear the bad words. In one ear and out the other. So you know, as I was growing up, most of the guys born and raised in Lā'ie, like me, always know not to use those kinds of words. And as we grew up that was it, when we hear we walk away. We walk out of the earshot. If we can't move, we just make like we don't hear it. We just blank.

WN: You grew up speaking English?

JM: Yeah. I grew up speaking English. All of us kids born and raised here and those that came when they were younger aboard the ship, we all spoke English. I know I did and the rest of us guys. Of course, we had our own English too, you know. Yeah, we had our own English. Better believe it. Example, "You go, I come." That was it. If you didn't understand, "You go, I come," sorry. We only said it once. (Laughs) In other words, one thing as we were growing up, we were clean. I don't know about the other guys but I never thought about a girl until I was older. And that wasn't until [World] War [II] broke out or just before the war broke out. When the war broke out I was fifteen years old. But like I said when we were growing up we didn't know all these bad words, profanity. No such thing over there. Not as I grew up. On the other town, maybe, Hau'ula and Kahuku maybe, but I don't know.

And the only *Haoles* are the *lunas*, the big boss, see. There weren't no *Haole* laborers. No way, jack. Not as I grew up. Like the magistrate we have now, Conklin. He grew up in Lā'ie, he graduate '43. Graduated the year before I did. Harold Conklin, he's the magistrate now. But he's local boy, born and raised in Kahuku. Course he went to the Mainland school, you know. Continue to get his lawyer, you know.

WN: What did your father do?

JM: My father [Muelu Meatoga] worked in the plantation [Kahuku Plantation Company]. Not only did he work in the plantation, but my dad. . . . Before I went to school in Lā'ie, my dad made three or four moves to Honolulu. Let's see, as I was growing up I think we moved to

Kamakela, I was either three or four years old. Kamakela Lane right off Kukui Street. So we looking at 1930, yeah.

WN: You were a young boy then?

JM: Yeah, around that neighborhood, about '29, '30 I guess.

WN: What was your father doing out there?

JM: My dad worked, different jobs. And he worked two jobs while we lived in Honolulu. And next I remember we were down at Democrat [Street] . . .

WN: Oh, Kalihi.

JM: Kalihi Kai, right across the railroad tracks. And I think our last move was Kam[ehameha] IV Road. The old tree is still there, right about a block down from Jack in the Box, off of School Street.

WN: So you're still kid yet, when you were making all these moves?

JM: Yeah, when we were living on Democrat Street, I used to spend time with my sister. My sister had already married. Was right across from O'ahu Prison [today O'ahu Community Correctional Center]. This is a little bit funny. I didn't know it was O'ahu Prison at that time. I seen the bars, and I seen the American flag. Every time I see the American flag, I'm thinking there's a school there, see. So one day I told my sister, "Oh boy, when I get old enough, when I go to school I want to go to that school."

(Laughter)

JM: 'Cause you know, concrete building, nice eh? Yeah, O'ahu Prison look pretty, you know, back in the twenties, in the early thirties.

WN: It was at the same place?

JM: Yeah, not too far from where we were living. 'Cause they lived right on Dillingham [Boulevard], her and her husband. Those cottages are still there yet. Live upstairs. Yeah, my sister laugh. I said, "Why you laugh, sister?"

And she told me, "Yeah, if you naughty boy that's where you going."

(Laughter)

JM: And I caught on, from then on no more. That's the first time I found out where O'ahu Prison was.

WN: Now when you folks were making these moves, you know, your father now is far away from the Mormon church though . . .

JM: Oh yeah.

WN: What, did he continue to be affiliated with the church?

JM: Oh yeah, we still did. Oh yeah. Every now and then my mom [Penina Meatoga] would say, "We gotta go back Lā'ie." (Laughs) My dad was making good money. My dad was making almost ten dollars a day.

WN: Working for what?

JM: Two jobs.

WN: Oh.

JM: And ten dollars a day, you know, that was plenty money those days. Back in the early thirties, you know. This is depression time, too.

WN: What kind of jobs did he have?

JM: Well, my dad was a handyman, you know. He was almost like a jack-of-all-trades, in a sense. I would say I can call my father that, at that age. He was about what, forty-four, maybe forty-five, yeah. So he worked two jobs, and I think Mom was working at the Libby [McNeill & Libby] cannery also. So our oldest sister used to take care of us. Me and my younger brother who was two years old. When I was four he was two. We two years apart. My sister, Anovale, took care while my mom and dad went to work.

Papa rented the house down at Democrat Street until Mama said, "No, we got to go back Lā'ie." And for all I know maybe that is our last, but I do recall the three places that we moved to. I do know when I went back to Lā'ie, I was going back to school (laughs). From then on it was no more movement after that. That's when Dad start working for the [Kahuku] Plantation [Company].

WN: I see. Did you go school at all in town?

JM: No, no. Went to Lā'ie School and after Lā'ie School I transferred over to the seventh grade in Kahuku [High and Intermediate School]. And I stayed there until the war broke out, because I was in the tenth grade at that time. Halfway through the tenth.

WN: So what was your father's obligation to the church?

JM: Well, his obligation to the church was to be a good Mormon, good Latter-Day Saint, that is. Pay his tiding and if he has a calling in the church, he should be performing his calling, when the time comes, see. Like me, I have a calling now. And my calling is I am the ward specialist. I'm the ward employment specialist. In other words, people who looking for job, they come to see me and I fix up their application and I send them to certain places, where to go and who to see. That's my calling. And also my obligation is going to the temple and working. So I have that. That's another of my calling. I have two callings, see. Those days they work during the day, you know, so they can do their calling during the evening when they *pau* work. Of course, plantation worker, you get up at dark, and you come home almost dark (laughs).

WN: The other Samoan families, did they work on the plantation, too?

JM: Some of them did, yeah, some of them did. In fact, when we were living in Honolulu, my dad was like a spokesman for the other rest of the Samoan brothers. Because some of them—a majority of them—didn't speak English. So he had to find jobs for them and he did. He did find jobs for them.

WN: So your dad spoke English real well?

JM: Oh yeah, he spoke enough to get by. Oh yeah, he spoke really good. The other people can understand. That's why he was able to work two jobs and the only reason my dad worked two jobs because he changed his name.

WN: Oh, to get two jobs?

JM: To get two jobs. Well, not only that, because they weren't hiring no Polynesian. Especially if you look Hawaiian. But my dad didn't look Hawaiian, my dad looked more like Oriental. He had beady eyes and he was fair looking. Mama was the dark one. Mama had our complexion.

WN: So he changed his name to. . . .

JM: Paul Lee.

WN: Paoly?

JM: Paul Lee.

WN: Oh, Paul?

JM: Lee. Either Paul or Ted I forgot. I know his last name was Lee. Yeah. That's how he got a job. And he was good at the job that he did, mostly carpentry.

WN: So people thought he was Chinese?

JM: Yeah. He passed. Him and his beady eyes, eh.

(Laughter)

JM: I liked when my dad talked English. When I was young growing up, he used to read the Book of Mormon or the Bible, you know, verses. He was kind of slow but I understood.

WN: Did he speak Samoan to you folks?

JM: Oh yeah, he spoke Samoan to us, but not as much as my mom did. My mom didn't speak no English until later she got years in Hawai'i. Then she started picking up a little Pidgin English. But my dad was all right. My dad knew how to fill up application and all that. Of course sometimes he'd bring it home, he'd ask my sister. But as I grew up---well, in high school, he used to ask me questions and I used to help him. In elementary I was pretty good in math. English was a humbug course, boy. If you spoke good English, boy, man, they [i.e., classmates] knock you down in those days. Mean heads (laughs). But, anyway, we had our own pidgin in my time as we grew up. Today, I don't hear it. You only hear it among us, when I talk to another guy my age, you know, then you hear it. The word *konpa*, you heard



that word before?

WN: "Together." Yeah, *konpa*.

JM: Yeah, *konpa*. Well, they used the Hawaiian words, *huki like*, among all the ethnic groups, even the *lunas*. They used that word, *huki like*. And you know what that means, too, eh?

WN: Yeah.

JM: There's quite a few of the Hawaiian words that were used during the plantation days, where everybody understood. Because the Japanese no understand Filipino or Chinese. So they had something in common. That's how the Pidgin English came about, and that's how all this Hawaiian slang came about, so each ethnic group can understand each other (chuckles). As I was growing up, my good friend was---we didn't have too many Japanese kids, you know, my hometown. There was only the Watanabe family, Kubota family, and Fujimoto. Well, Fujimoto, he's still young yet. He had just gotten married. And if he had a baby, they were still small. About this time I'm about seven years old, yeah. And there was the Ogawas.

WN: What did they do? Plantation?

JM: Mr. Watanabe was a taxi driver. And Fujimoto was a taxi driver. But Mr. Kubota worked for the plantation. He took care of the Lā'ie store, plantation store. The store is gone now, it is now a three-story building. Owned by one of the Goo boys, G-O-O. Big, three-story building, all concrete. That's where the old plantation store used to be, La'ie. And the building between Mr. Kubota and the plantation store was the post office. And that was right on Lanihuli Road. That's the road that took you right up to the old mission house. Between the mission house and the [Mormon] temple there was only one trail. Well, there was a road actually. It was a dirt road. You walk to the temple. The rest was banana field, toward the mountain, and sugarcane on the left side. And of course, we had our stable on the right, the Kahuku stable. They had horses and cattle. We used to use the pasture as our playground, too. Sometime we played with the two bulls, Pila and Leilehua. (Laughs) Pila was terrible. So far so good, you know. (Knocks on wood) Nobody got hurt. We go over there, we tease him, you know. Both male, bull yeah, Leilehua and Pila. Leilehua was easy. Easy come, easy go, more the domestic type. But Pila was mean. (Laughs) Pila was mean, boy. Me and a couple of other kids used to dare Pila. Oh boy, one time Pila almost caught me, boy. I just ran and jumped (laughs) in the pine tree. See, in the pasture, had a row of pine trees and they were equally spaced, you know. But they cut 'em, I don't know why. But always get some branch hanging down. Man, I'm telling you boy, that Pila something else.

WN: Were most of your playmates Samoan?

JM: No, mixture. More Hawaiian, we had Hawaiian, Japanese. . . . Not too---there's only one Filipino family.

WN: But the town of Lā'ie had mostly . . .

JM: Plantation workers.

WN: Plantation workers.

JM: Where my house was located, right off Iosepa Street, right in the back was a plantation camp, my backyard. That consist of one Korean family, Mr. Lee, one Puerto Rican family, Martinez, and I think that was it. No, and there were Japanese and Filipinos. And you know, funny thing about it, the Filipino on one side and Japanese on the other side (laughs). That's right. They never mix 'em. They never mix the Japanese and the Filipinos together, no. They did the same thing in Kahuku, they never did. [Camps housing workers of Kahuku Plantation Company were located in both Lā'ie and Kahuku.] As far as I can remember, the Filipinos all on one side of the camp and the Japanese on the other side of the camp. And in between, you had the Korean, Mr. Lee, and Mr. Martinez, the Puerto Rican. And their son, he and I were the same age, we went to school together. Boy, he was a mean guy.

WN: Which one, Martinez?

JM: Yeah, Martinez. Oh, his mouth wasn't too clean either sometime. That's how we get a lot of fight. And me and him used to get into a lot of fight, boy, yeah. But he always get the worst at the end, yeah.

WN: Were a lot of these people members of the church?

JM: No. There were a few Japanese people, members of the church. Mr. Lee was, not Mr. Martinez, no. Then Mr. Lee moved out. He moved out and then he had his own place.

WN: And you folks all got along? No problems?

JM: Oh yeah, all us kids. No, we didn't have no problems, Filipino, Japanese, no . . .

WN: . . . nobody teased each other because. . .

JM: Uh uh, no. When I went to high school, well, we had a little squabble now and then. That passed, you know. Most of the time, we did our work, we played good together.

WN: Didn't have any discrimination against someone?

JM: No, not those days.

WN: You were saying earlier, that your father had to change his name to work in Honolulu because they weren't hiring Samoans?

JM: That's right, at that time they weren't hiring no Polynesians, especially Hawaiians. I don't know, somehow, Hawaiians had a bad name. Seemed like all they wanted to do was, you know, everything free for them. Now, in a sense I don't blame them at that time. Too bad they didn't have that thing [i.e., demands for a sovereign Hawaiian nation] going on, my time. Then by now they would own all the land already. (Laughs) But I guess the *Haoles* kind of brainwash 'em, from before. Well, you can't win for losing.

Well, anyhow, as I say we finally moved back to Lā'ie and I went to school, and we stayed permanently. And I went to school right on through to high school, up until 1941 when the war broke out.

We don't have all these other things they have today for the children, you know. As it is



now, today, this generation, they got too much. They can't make up their mind, and now they don't have it now. If it wasn't for the drugs, they'd be all right. So where else can they go? When we were growing up, drugs wasn't our problem. We always felt, well, if we cannot play down here, we go up and play in the mountain. This generation, it's not a mountain, you know. This generation don't believe in going up to the mountain, except if maybe you pay 'em something, you know. If it's something that's going to be worth their while. Otherwise, they ain't never gonna go on the mountain. No way, jack. Not even the country ones, they don't go in the mountains today, this generation. So as I say, the mountain was our playground and the ocean was our swimming pool. The ocean fed us. Those days, we only took what we needed. Even as us kids, as we grew up, we all were taught, as Latter-Day Saints, you take only what you need. If you had little bit more, then you share.

WN: What kind of fishing did you folks do?

JM: Well, we had net, spear, and that's all. Of course, we had the surround [net]. We either surround at night or daytime and they call that *pa'ipa'i*. Then they have the *moemoe*, which is you put the net out in the evening, alongside the reef, and you anchor both ends of the net, the *moemoe* net, and then you leave. Then you come back in the morning and pick it up. Usually a *moemoe* net is usually a gill net. When the fish go through there, you get hung on the gill.

WN: What kind fish had?

JM: Usually have *weke*, no, hardly any *weke*, mostly *manini*. Couple butterfly, maybe, what we call butterfly. And *āholehole*. And if the *weke* is big enough, might get gilled, too. And there's the mullet, very seldom mullet though, not at night.

N: You went mostly at night?

JM: Mostly at night. This is strictly *moemoe*, eh. A *moemoe* net is usually put out in the evening. Like about eight, nine o'clock or before that. And then they leave it there, after they anchor both end. And then they come pick it up in the morning. That's a *moemoe*. The *pa'ipa'i* is when they had maybe fifty to seventy-five-foot net. And it's also a gill net, could be used as a *moemoe* net, but this time you having a little *hukilau*. A *pa'ipa'i*---in other words what it is, you banging the fish, you know, hitting the fish . . .

WN: Splash [i.e., slap] the water.

JM: So, yeah, splash the water so they [fish] hit the net, and you bring the net up as you doing that, see.

WN: The net was how big, now?

JM: It's almost like a gill net, in a sense.

WN: So how many people did you need?

JM: Oh, sometime maybe all you need is about five or four. But more the merrier. Two to pull, then the other two to make noise, see. This is called a *pa'ipa'i*. And this can be done nighttime, this can be done daytime. But daytime is better because then you see the fish.

Nighttime is blind (laughs).

WN: Nighttime is mostly *moemoe*, then?

JM: That's right.

WN: Because you leave it out.

JM: Right.

WN: Let me turn over the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay. How did you folks prepare your fish?

JM: Well, it depends on the---if you hungry, you build a fire and you *pūlehu*. *Pūlehu* is "barbecue." That means guts and all. But we don't eat the gut, just cook it, then after we cook it, the thing get soft, you know. And where the gut is we just throw it away. And *manini*, whatever fish it is. But most of the time the fish goes home. Goes home, clean, and put on the side. Maybe not for now, maybe tomorrow, or the day after. Put 'em under refrigeration. Or if you like have a little snack, you can *pūlehu*, not *pūlehu*, but, oh, I forgot the Hawaiian word [*lomi*]. They mash the meat or they cut it and make like *poke*. I know when I was growing up, I recall, my mother used to mash the meat soft, you know. The raw meat now (chuckles), ain't talking about the cooked meat. Raw meat, mash it up, and feed it to me and my brother.

WN: When you folks were . . .

JM: . . . were small, yeah. I don't know if my wife gave that to our son. I don't think so, because he born and raised in Massachusetts. But oh, we make sure he eat *poi*, eh. Soon as we came home, we feed him *poi*. (Laughs) He was only about six months old. Oh, my wife feed him *poi*, so he get used to.

WN: You folks ate raw fish?

JM: Oh yeah. I eat fish raw. Any kind of fish that's edible, I eat 'em raw. Yeah, no problem.

WN: Samoan-style and Hawaiian-style is similar, yeah?

JM: Almost similar, yeah. Well, because they all Polynesians. They might talk differently, but their food preparation and their eating is all the same. Very seldom they are different, hardly any difference at all. They eat the same thing we eat, yeah. In the same way they prepare, the same way we prepare.

WN: You folks eat '*ulu* more than Hawaiians?

- JM: Oh yeah. Well, supposedly, you know. But no, the Hawaiians eat the *'ulu*. But I think the Samoans, they more the taro and breadfruit. But the Hawaiians, the taro is the *poi* for them. The taro becomes a delicacy when it is cooked and cut. And that was the *kār* taro. Ooh, that was the best in the west. It was just like, filet mignon. (Laughs) That's right.
- WN: What kind taro?
- JM: *Kār*.
- WN: *Kār*.
- JM: It had a sticky, but firm texture itself, the taro. It never broke apart. You can cut 'em thin and it'll stay [in one piece].
- WN: That's wetland taro?
- JM: Yeah, that's a wetland taro, and I don't see it anymore, I don't know what happened. All we got is this other taro, the red *pi'iali'i*. And they crack, they fall apart. They not as---well, you can still cut it. But you cannot cut it thin, you gotta cut 'em at least about half an inch thick. And then it'll hold. Then you cook and fry. So, I worked in the taro patch as I grow up, each of us Latter-Day Saints in Lā'ie, each family had a taro patch. Most of them either had a taro patch or banana field. We had both, we had a taro patch and a banana field. Banana field was up alongside the temple and the taro patch was right down in front of the temple, and off the temple road. Then we had another taro patch up at what is now BYU [Brigham Young University]. All that place used to be sugarcane and taro patches.
- WN: Was the college up by then?
- JM: No. The college did not come up until, see, I forgot, in the fifties I think, or the sixties. [Church College of Hawai'i, later known as Brigham Young University-Hawai'i, was established in 1955.]
- WN: Church College [of Hawai'i], yeah?
- JM: Church College, yeah.
- WN: So, the banana patch and the taro patch was only for your family?
- JM: Yeah, each family had their own. And sometime you go help the other family. Especially the family that don't have any boys, only get girls. But even the girls, too, you know, we all grew up being in the taro patch already. All those my age, born and raised Lā'ie, you better believe it they been in the taro patch. I don't care what nationality they are, they all been in the taro patch. The Filipino, the Japanese, they all been in the taro patch (laughs). Because it seems, as I grew up in Lā'ie, we had that bond between us. Even though we did not speak each other's language, we had that togetherness. When a party was given, everybody help. Whatever the occasion may be, birthday, baby *lū'au*, somebody's wedding, the whole community help. Even those [living] in the plantation [camps] help. Every time we have something going, the plantation people are invited, oh yeah. I mean, they were Catholics, but they were not strong Catholics because if they wanted to go to church they got to go Kahuku to go to church. 'Cause they no more church in Lā'ie, Lā'ie is strictly Mormon land, see.

And the Mormons, they leased the land to the plantation so the plantation people can live there. That's how it was, it was nice. We all along. When I went to school, there was a good friend of mine, he graduated '44. He did, I didn't. I quit school in '42. Shinko Hamashige, his sister was older than us, she graduated in '42. And she became a nurse. Nurse in the military, army nurse. Haven't heard about her. My good friend, Shinko, he was real quiet Japanese, Hamashige. Real soft-spoken, quiet. But he became a lawyer (chuckles). That's what cracks me up. No, he became a doctor, not a lawyer. Last time I recall he was in Chicago, practicing. He went to Chicago to become a doctor, yeah. Most of these guys are. . . . Then there's the Owan [family], from Kahuku.

WN: Owan.

JM: Owan, yeah. He used to be lobbying at the White House. Almost fourteen, fifteen years ago. And when we had a class reunion, he used to come back. He's a '44 graduate.

WN: So, you're saying really then, that you were closer to the community, than to the church?

JM: No, on the whole, we were close to the church, in the sense. But the community was there, every day, twenty-four hours, see. The church is only on Sunday, and whatever. . . . See, us children as we grew up, we didn't have no obligations, but we had responsibilities. Meaning, each guy was responsible to do this, to do that, you know, your normal chores. Then of course you had your spiritual side that you gotta abide with, as you grew up. But you know, young kids, ain't too much spiritual in us, you know, when we young, growing up. Too much *kolohe*, man (laughs). Like you know, going to some neighbor house and turning the stone over. The guy get nice, white stone in the front of his yard, turn the *bugga* out, (laughs). Terrible, yeah? Oh, maybe go up the watermelon patch during the summer and *'aihue* somebody's watermelon. (Laughs) *'Aihue* means "take," see. We don't use the word "steal," we never steal, we only take.

(Laughter)

JM: Now when it concerned money, that's a different story. Then we used the word steal. The guys said, "Now, wait a minute."

You know, I tell my buddies, we in the service, "Look, you never tell a guy that he stole. If it is money, yeah, but if it is not money, then it is taking."

"What's the difference?"

There is a difference. Okay. Money, can get back sometime. But money, in a sense, is the root of all evil. That's the worst evil you can have. That's why it is more proper to use the word "steal," than to use "take." Because take, sometime you change your mind, you put back. You can always replace the take but you cannot replace a steal. Because when you taking, you only think whether he going miss it or nah, I bring 'em back later, you know. But when you steal, your mind is set 100 percent, not to return this item. And usually it is money. You see my philosophy, don't you? There's a difference, because "steal" is not a good word. "Steal" can really turn a person's whole concept of ownership, or whatever.

Oh, I got to tell you this incident. We call these train cars, that [you] put the burnt sugarcane on, we call 'em *kakalakas*.

WN *Kakalakas?*

JM: Yeah, 'cause they make that sound.

WN: Oh. (Chuckles)

JM: When they roll, eh? *Kakalaka, kakalaka*, yeah. That's it, clack, clack, clack, clack. So we call 'em *kakalaka*. And this was on a Saturday, I think. Saturday, noon, plantation *pau* work everything. And they left six or seven of these empty *kakalakas*, up the hill. Well, that's the same place where Kano's watermelon field is, too, see. Well, we just thought we'd go up there and play, play engineer and all that. Train operator (Laughs). Next thing we know, the thing coming down, somebody released the brake, ain't no way we can stop 'em. (Laughs) Coming down, you know. There was five of us and seven of these cane cars. And that thing went all the way down across the highway. (Laughs) We took off. Cars no can go by, no can go by. They had to call the, I think they called some Filipino workers, you know, and they took the thing out of the highway. Right down Mālaekahana. You know where Mālaekahana is? You know the quarry, down Lā'ie?

WN: No, I don't know the quarry.

JM: Okay, you know there's a service station used to be there on the left.

WN: I don't know. I don't know Lā'ie that well.

JM: When the last time you went Lā'ie?

WN: Oh. . . .

JM: Did you come from Honolulu side, or did you come from Kuilima side?

WN: Gee, Kuilima side I guess.

JM: If you came from Kuilima side, you went through Kahuku, right? As you went through Kahuku, you going to Lā'ie, right? Okay, when you go---the first park before you hit Lā'ie was Mālaekahana park on the left. Then there's a round turn. Well, as you go around the curve, then on the right there used to be a service station, but it's now Cackle [Fresh] Eggs [Farm]. Well, it was that road that went up there, that was where the train came all the way down and block (laughs). Oh, man, I tell you, it was terrible.

WN: So it used to take it to the mill?

JM: No, the train take the cane cars. The cane cars were filled with sugarcane.

WN: And took 'em to the mill?

JM: And they took 'em to the sugar mill in Kahuku, see. They had sugarcane all the way to Kahana. And they had the tracks all the way to Kahana, railroad tracks. But they had these side tracks, see, that take the cane cars up in the mountains, where the sugarcane is. And then they got this big shovel, no, they used to put [load] 'em up by hand. Yeah, they throw 'em up by hand, fill 'em up by hand, by yiminy. 'Cause I don't remember they had the crane. If



they had the crane . . .

WN: Oh, they went up the little ladder and throw 'em [i.e., sugarcane] in the cane car?

JM: Yeah, in the cane car.

WN: Let me turn this off.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JM: No, not cane cars, now. Now, they have this truck.

WN: Right, right, right.

JM: Because when the truck go . . .

WN: With the grabber, yeah.

JM: Yeah, it got the grabber, so when the truck gets down to the mill, all he has to do is turn the whole truck, and all the sugarcane falls into the chute, see.

WN: What did your father do? What was his job?

JM: I guess, he working in the sugarcane field. Yeah, what they call, ho, the words they used to use. *Hukipau*, they used the word, *hukipau*.

WN: *Hukipau*?

JM: In other words, the quicker you go, the quicker you finish, *hukipau*. *Huki* 'til the end, yeah. Well, actually, that's what it means. The faster you work, the faster you *pau*. The longer the break you get.

WN: Is that *ukupau* or *hukipau*?

JM: Say that again?

WN: *Ukupau*, eh?

JM: *Hukipau*. No, *huki*.

WN: Like the rubbish man today, the faster they work, they can go home.

JM: Yeah, hmm, *huki*. *Huki* had a . . .

WN: *Huki* means pull.

JM: Has a different---it's a pull and also not only a pull, but it could be a grab, anything to lift, eh. I guess, they use the same word. I've always used *hukipau*. It's always been *hukipau*. I know my time is *hukipau*. If they change the word, it ain't my fault. (Laughs) I come from the country.

WN: You know you were saying, that you folks never used swear words . . .

JM: No, we sure didn't.

WN: I was wondering. What kind of discipline did your parents have on you folks?

JM: Ho. Well . . .

WN: With the belt though?

JM: Well, sometime with the belt, and sometime with a stick, or with a pine [branch]. The pine is the worst one.

WN: Hard, eh.

JM: Ho, it stings. The belt and the stick don't sting, it hurts, you know.

WN: You mean the pine . . .

JM: The pine leaves---the parents strip the thing off, all the leaves, and only the branch, you know, yeah. My goodness. I see some of the girls and some of the boys, I see them come to school. I see their leg, get the red mark. But me, I no more.

WN: Oh, how come (chuckles)?

JM: Because me, I listen that's why. Most of the time. Sometime I pass the buck over to my younger brother. But he don't get licking though. 'Cause anything go wrong I get the licking, he doesn't. I never licked my brother. I don't think I ever touch him. No. I'm always taking care of my brother.

WN: You said, you know, when the community got together for certain things, what kind of things, holidays?

JM: Holidays, you name it. The whole thing---we used to have a Lā'ie Day. We still do. In fact, tomorrow they're having a parade. They started the Lā'ie Day last week Saturday at Lā'ie . . .

WN: What occasion does it mark?

JM: It marks the---I don't know, it's just Lā'ie Day I guess. It started, you know, I don't know how. Well, it could be celebrating the beginning, with the first Mormons, the missionaries. Then Lā'ie became a town, yeah. We looking at about close to 100 years, I think. I was hoping I'd be able to go tomorrow, but well. . . .

WN: You still have friends and family out there?

JM: Yeah. My cousins still live there. My cousins that we grew up. My cousin's only six months younger than I am. Lā'ie Tualii is his name and he married that girl, Kamoha girl, her name Happy. And he lives with her on their land, the church do not own this land. The church do not own any land beyond the bridge, the Lā'ie Wai bridge. Anything between the two bridges



there, they own. And that's a big area, boy, gee. That's how you can always tell Lā'ie proper. The first bridge that you enter from Kahuku side, till the last bridge when you leave the Polynesian Cultural Center. As soon as you leave the Polynesian Cultural Center, about fifty yards later, you come across that bridge, that's it. That's the imaginary boundary line, approximate. The church do not own anything beyond that. But everything straight up to the mountain (laughs) is Latter-Day Saints. And all the sugarcane [land] that were there, it was leased to the plantation.

WN: By the church?

JM: By the church. Yeah, growing up in Lā'ie was nice. I enjoyed my younger days, growing up, going to school. I think there was only one incident that marred my growing up, the killing that occurred in our plantation camp in the back of my house. [Somebody] killed the bride. He was jealous, I guess. And we attended the wedding party and everything. I was a little boy. I was about---this happened about 1939, I think, '39 or '40. I was old enough to know, yeah. But we had the police officers, Mr. Broad and Kekauoha. Arnold [Kekauoha] and Johnny Broad, both policemen. I don't think they killed him, they wounded him. I guess, only because they want to question him in regards to that. That was the only incident I recall, as I grew up, prior to the war.

WN: Who were some of the leaders of the community? Were there chiefs at all?

JM: No. The Latter-Day Saint community is run by the bishop. And at that time, as I grew up, there were two bishops, Bishop Plunkett and Bishop Kekauoha, before I went in the service. I think Bishop Kekauoha was the last bishop, prior to my going into the service, that I know of. 'Cause Lā'ie was one whole ward, one community. Maybe at that time consisted of, no more than 400 or 500 population. Because the majority of the population was the plantation camp. But eventually, as us kids came along, population got bigger and bigger. See, our church is built up on wards, like we do today. But those days there was only one stake, one region, one area, that's all. That covers the whole Hawaiian islands. Now . . .

WN: So those other branches like Kalihi, they all came later?

JM: They came later, that is correct, they all came later, right. Kalihi, Waikīkī, Mānoa, Pearl City, Hālawā, Waipahu, Leeward, Mililani, Wahiawā, all came later. Lā'ie now has about, oh, I don't know how many wards they have. And they have a lot of bishops, too, (laughs) Lā'ie. For every ward, there's a bishop. In my time, there was one bishop, and one president of the temple, that was all.

And I went to school and all, I played football '40 and '41.

WN: So you went to Lā'ie School first?

JM: I went to Lā'ie up to sixth grade.

WN: How was that?

JM: Oh, that was pretty good. Yeah, but I always get beat down though. I was pretty sharp in my class. But this girl, Tamie Morimoto, bless her heart, I'm glad she's still living yet. She married a classmate. Not a classmate, but a guy above her. And she married Chinese boy, but

local boy, Roger Chang. Morimotos, yeah, that's the other family, I'm sorry, that was the other Japanese family, I knew there was one more. They were the last house, on the way to the back road to the mountain, in the back of the temple. Tamie always beat me in everything. Well not too bad, you know. She had a hundred, I had ninety-five. She had ninety-five, I had a ninety. You might say we were the two smartest in the class. I don't know, I guess, I didn't know at that time, even as I grew up. But a lot of people sensed my potentials, but I didn't notice those things at all, until I came in the service. Then I found out my potential. I have a terrific memory.

WN: You do.

JM: Majority of the places that I've been, I can recall in details. All my traveling, my adventures, mostly traveling because I spent twenty-seven years in the military, after the war broke out. But growing up in Lā'ie was the best. As children of the Church of Jesus Christ [of] Latter-Day Saints, we were blessed with the attitude of loving each other and taking care of each other. And knowing that life is precious, and to believe in God is wonderful, everything looks nice and bright outside. No matter how bad the mortal situation is down here, hey, no worry, eventually something good will come out of it. Yeah, by golly.

WN: Do you remember other Samoan families coming in from Samoa, while you were growing up? Or did the community, more or less, stay with this core of families, and they were just having kids and so forth? Do you remember any group of more Samoans coming in?

JM: No, I don't remember. Well, if they were Latter-Day Saints, I can't recall. I'm trying to think of who came after. See, after the war, there weren't too many families. . . . Well, you see---the reason why I cannot recall is because I was not at home. I went in 1945, the war was still on. So, between the time my parents came in 1924 until '45, there'll be no Samoan family that I can remember that came from Samoa.

WN: They came after the war, yeah?

JM: They all---majority of them came after the war.

WN: So, if anybody came it would be like a family member. . . .

JM: Yeah, it's usually a family member. But we had quite a few new families came in right after Korean War, or before the Korean War.

WN: About 1950.

JM: Yeah, 1951, '52, they start coming in. [In 1950, 117 Samoan U.S. Navy personnel arrived in Hawai'i from American Samoa, along with 257 dependents. The men were later allowed to send for remaining dependents, and in 1951, 958 Samoans arrived.] They had a big gang came in, I think '53, they came in. Big group of Samoans. But I was stationed, where? I was stationed in Texas (laughs). I was in Texas on my way to Korea, 1953, after spending eighteen months in Waco, James County, that is.

WN: Waco.

JM: James County, yeah. Waco, the hub of Texas, yeah.

WN: That's where Baylor University is.

JM: That is correct.

WN: What I want to do is, if it's okay with you, stop here and pick up another time with the war experience.

JM: Oh, okay. All right, I'll go along with that.

WN: So we'll stop here, okay?

JM: Okay.

WN: All right.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 22-47-2-92 and 22-48-2-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

John Meatoga (JM)

August 26, 1992

Makakilo, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with John Meatoga, on August 26, 1992, at his home in Makakilo, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, let's start with our second interview. Why don't we start by having you tell me what you remember about December 7, [1941].

JM: Well, I remember, as I was on my way down to the beach, which is early in the morning, could've been about maybe eight-thirty [A.M.], I guess. Yeah, between eight-thirty and nine, thereabouts. As I passed the Mutual Telephone Company, which today is called Hawaiian Tel, there was a guard there. There was an [U.S.] Army soldier and he had his rifle and on his rifle he had his bayonet. And he stopped me. He asked me where I was going.

I said, "I'm going to the beach."

He said, "No, you're not, you're gonna go home."

I said, "Why I'm gonna go home for?"

He said, "There's a war on. The Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor."

Well, I didn't say nothing. I turned around and went home and sure enough, yeah. My sister was crying, I guess my brother-in-law was getting ready to leave. In fact, when I got there he was already getting in his car with his clothes and everything, to go to Pearl Harbor, 'cause they were calling all the servicemen back. And at that time my brother-in-law was a first class. Now I know he's a first class because he got three stripes, see. I remember he had three stripes when the war broke out. And we never see him for about a week. I was fifteen at that time, and I went up to my. . . . No, I stayed home for a while, yeah, and listened. Then I went up to my cousin's place, then I went to Hau'ula, with some other friends. While we were there we looked up in the sky and we see the Japanese planes. Looks like they were heading toward Bellows Field [and] Kāne'ohe Naval [Air Station]. People were just going all over the place. The radio guy was saying—it was KGU—was saying that they were using all private vehicles, too, for haul all the wounded from Pearl Harbor. And also, even Downtown, Honolulu, 'cause they tried to bomb the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], and probably tried to get the governor's mansion. But I think was more so the YMCA. Because . . .

WN: Downtown YMCA.

JM: Yeah, Downtown, because that was the armed forces [i.e., Army-Navy] YMCA. It was no civilian. It was strictly for the armed forces. Usually they got a lot of people in there, GIs. Anyhow, the bombs landed---I think there were some carpenters or painters right down the road. Well, what's so ironic about it is it killed two or three Japanese workers, local, yeah. Supposedly there was a bomb dropped, I guess it was meant for the governor's mansion, and it dropped on Beretania [Street].

WN: Was this Japanese or was this anti-aircraft American bomb?

JM: No, no, no, this was a Japanese bomb. If it was American, man, there'd be a big hole. But, anyway, this all happened on December 7. [Reports claim that shells which struck the lawn of Washington Place and other Downtown Honolulu areas were American anti-aircraft shells.]

WN: Okay, now tell me, you folks were up in Lā'ie . . .

JM: Yeah.

WN: . . . which is pretty far, pretty far from Pearl Harbor. Were people excited and everything up there?

JM: Well, we were kind of excited, in a sense, some of them were angry, you know. The funny part about it. . . . We had Japanese family, living among us, that went work for the plantation, Mr. and Mrs. Fujimoto and Mr. and Mrs. Watanabe and Mr. Kubota, the two brothers, they worked for the plantation. And I believe, that was the only Japanese families in Lā'ie, at that time. No, there was another family, Koizumi, lived up in the back of Lanihuli, to the right of the temple. He was our egg man, besides, he raised chicken. And that was it, that was the only people.

WN: When the sentry stopped you and told you that Pearl Harbor was bombed, did you believe him at that time?

JM: No, I didn't believe him at all. But, I wasn't going to argue with the GI with the saber on that rifle of his. He didn't have no protective cover, everything was bare, man, he looked like he was ready for poke somebody (laughs). So, I didn't believe him at first, but I didn't say it either, I just kept my mouth shut and listen. And then I turned around and went home, and that's how I knew. I don't recall hearing [about] it the first time, 'cause I was up early and I made my breakfast, ate little bit, whatever was left over the night before. The night before was Saturday. Well, the night before, I forgot, I think San Jose [State University] played University of Hawai'i. And I don't know if that was the Shriner's [game] or what, see. [University of Hawai'i's football opponent on December 6, 1941, was Willamette University in the annual Shrine Game. The San Jose State University football team was also in Honolulu, but was scheduled to play the University of Hawai'i the following Saturday, December 13. The game was never played.] And then we went home.

WN: You went to the game?

JM: Yeah, of course Kahuku High School was invited, the band. And I played on the band, see. And we were Diamond Head side of the *makai* bleachers.

WN: This is the old stadium?

JM: The old stadium.

WN: Honolulu [Stadium].

JM: Down, right on Isenberg and King Street.

WN: So, you guys were at the game?

JM: Yeah, we were at the game Saturday, Saturday afternoon. And we came home. And of course, what happened after that, jiminy Christmas! We seen all the trucks, the army trucks coming down in the late afternoon. All the engineers, they start laying barbed-wire fence on the beaches.

WN: This was right away, the next day, or Saturday?

JM: No, this was in the [Sunday] afternoon, they start coming.

WN: That day?

JM: That day, yeah. And right on through the night, you know. And the next day again, too. Monday, all day. I don't know how long it took 'em, but they had barbed wire going all over the island. I believe so. Even Nānākuli side, Barber's Point. 'Ewa, I think they didn't have too many homes down there. I don't recall any homes down there. All I recall was 'Ewa Plantation [Company]. So, December 7, it was exciting in a sense. Some of the guys joke about it. And we kid our buddies, you know, Japanese, eh. All kind of jokes and whatnot. But it's all in fun, because we're all teenagers, you know. And my friend, Watanabe, he and I attended the same school. He was my very, very, close friend. 'Cause he lived just the road up from me, on the same side of the temple road. We call it the temple road. I forgot, I don't know what they call it now. I'm trying to think of the name.

WN: Not Iosepa?

JM: No, we lived on Iosepa [Street], but there's a cross road that comes across Iosepa, there is a name now, but I forgot. All we used to call it was the temple road. 'Cause the temple road come down the old bridge, then it came down, made a left turn, and then pass in front my house, and then by Kanno's corner. Oh, that's famous Kanno's corner. Oh, yeah, I forgot Kanno also, he was a laundry man. The wife and daughters took in the laundries for the people in Lā'ie. And also, Kanno was a farmer. That's the one I tell you, we used to steal watermelons from him.

(Laughter)

JM: That's the closest patch, that's why, to the Lā'ie Quarry. Anyhow, so December 8, the [U.S.] Engineer [Department], oh man, they had all kind army vehicles all over the road, on the highway. Well, that was the only vehicle traveling. All other vehicles either had to be guys going to work, like the City and County of Honolulu, and probably guys in uniform, GIs. Well, there weren't too many military guys. I know my brother-in-law, that's the only one I know was in the military, active duty, [U.S.] Navy. I don't remember anybody else.



WN: So, military trucks, where were they going? Putting up the barbed wire . . .

JM: Putting up the barbed-wire fences, yeah. And then of course, they brought in some military guys later, and they went up in the mountain. And this supposedly be the coast artillery, see. We can see them with the big guns. And today---after the war, you know, I found out what the guns were. They were 155 millimeter, yeah, and no problem, you know. From the mountains there is only three miles [to the ocean], and the [guns shot] further than that. So what they did was, they used to practice. They shoot at that little island out there, in Lā'ie. There's Goat Island, then the little island [Pulemoku], and then Laniloa Point [i.e., Lā'ie Point]. So, that's the one they'd aim [Pulemoku Island]. They won't aim at the one that was close to Laniloa [Mokuālai Island], 'cause it was too close to Lā'ie Point. Because nobody lived there anyway, there weren't no homes. Eventually, they took over the pasture, we had a pasture there. Actually they took over the Kahuku Ranch. They took over Kahuku Ranch.

WN: And they used it for what?

JM: They used that to live there.

WN: Oh, I see.

JM: They pitched the tent, and they had troops around there. And the troops lived there. They lived there for I don't know how long.

WN: So, during the war years, you remember soldiers walking around town?

JM: Oh, yeah, walking around our town. Not that much soldiers, you know. It was just a small complement of them. And they used to come down from the hills, you know. I guess, that's [Kahuku Ranch grounds] where they eat, they live and everything. And they go up there [mountains] during the day. Or they have, you know, night, and they rotate, I guess. That's where they camp, right there, in [Kahuku] Ranch, past that. And that was right across from the church, that's a big lot, too. And they pitched their tent. And I know, because (chuckles) us kids we used to go over there, watch you know. We can smell the bread cooking, you know, when they bake the bread. 'Cause the army got---they bake their own bread. We didn't know that, but at that time that's what they did.

WN: You mean, they baked it in the field . . .

JM: They brought their own oven.

WN: Oh.

JM: Portable ovens, yeah.

WN: What about the [Mormon] church? Did they take over any parts of the church?

JM: No, they didn't take no part of the church. See, from Lā'ie all the way on the leeward side and probably on the other side, the North Shore, and all around to Mokuē'ia and Ka'ena Point, coming down this [leeward] side. And even, probably in Waipahu. Well, they all had the guns. In 1942, I think, latter part of '42 or early part of '43, they removed the gun emplacement here [i.e., in 'Ewa]. That's how we get the two big bunkers over there ['Ewa]



now.

WN: Oh, you mean the . . .

JM: Yeah, Fort Barrette. You can see 'em tomorrow. Anyway, so December 7 was an excitement for us, 'cause me, I'm a teenager, you know. Man, I'm gung ho when it comes to excitement, you know. We kidded our Japanese friends. That was all. But, the *Haoles* didn't, the *Haoles* were something else, man. 'Cause I don't know, I only hear stories.

WN: You mean the *Haole* soldiers?

JM: No, I'm talking about the *Haole* people.

WN: Who lived out there?

JM: No, the only *Haole* people we had out there was the school principal and one, two, three teachers, four teachers, the elementary [school]. Now, I don't know about Kahuku [School]. No, when December 7 came, the principal was Mr. Miyamoto, right. He was our principal. Of course, we didn't have school.

WN: Yeah, for how long?

JM: I don't know how long. I can't remember. Maybe it wasn't that long actually. We're looking at maybe---we were out of school maybe only a few days, yeah, just a few days. Eventually, over the radio [announcement], everybody had to go back school. So when I went back school, I was only fifteen, no. Every Sunday I got up early in the morning, I go up to the beach and I just watch, you know. I don't have my throw net, but my cousin has. So, I go out and I see the school fish and I run back to his house. And this is all before church begins. You not supposed to do that, but it ain't my fault I'm just young kid, you know.

(Laughter)

WN: So, you went back school?

JM: Yeah. We went back to school and I quit school on my birthday, May the third, '42.

WN: What made you do that?

JM: 'Cause I wanted to go work. I was sixteen and you was eligible to resign from school if you want to, but you gotta work. You just can't resign, you know, because boy, they gonna (chuckles) probably give you a hard time.

WN: How were you doing in school at that time?

JM: I was doing pretty good. I was averaging about a C-plus. Oh, my math wasn't too bad, I had B on my. . . . So, my lowest grade was a C-plus. That was my English.

WN: Quitting school was your own decision?

JM: Was my own decision, yeah.

WN: Were other kids . . .

JM: And my parents went along with it. Sometimes you cannot quit school, you know, you gotta have your parents' permission.

WN: What about your classmates?

JM: See, they could have quit school later, when their [sixteenth] birthday came around. But my classmate, Watanabe, did not quit school. He graduated in '44. And a lot of my other classmates, I don't think there were any of the Japanese boys that quit school. They all finished their education and then they went in the service, some of them.

WN: What about other Samoans?

JM: There weren't too many Samoans. Maiava quit school, Neff. Who else? I'm trying to think if there was any other Samoan boys besides me and Neff. . . . That's it.

WN: So, there weren't too many other boys quitting school to go work during the war?

JM: If there were, I didn't know. There weren't too many at all. I know I was one of them, and Neff was one of them and that's all I recall. I was at that age. Neff was eighteen. He went to war later, they drafted him.

WN: So, that's what you wanted to do? You wanted to quit school and work?

JM: Yeah, go to work. Because of the money.

WN: They were offering good money?

JM: Well, it wasn't so---at that time it was good money, fifty cents an hour. But mainly because I wanted to help, too. Do my share, in a sense.

WN: Oh, the war.

JM: The war, yeah. See, I never knew how to drive. That's how I learned how to drive, working. I started pick and shovel.

WN: So, if say the war didn't start. You think you would have quit school?

JM: No, no, my ambition was going to 'Iolani School and then on to University of Hawai'i. I was pretty big, you know. I was pretty much an athletic type. I could play any given sport, halfway decent. I mean, I could play any sport and make the team. But, you can't play [only] sports, you have to have a little brain too. You ain't got no brain, you ain't going to be able to play sports. Anyway, there was one sport, that you know today, you don't need no brain, all you need is muscle (chuckles). That's a boxing game. I never was a slugger, I always box with my head, not with my arms. By the same token, that's how I work. I work with my head, not with my hands and feet. I'm always thinking the most expedient and easiest way to accomplish my project (chuckles).

WN: So, you had a job lined up already by the time you quit school?

JM: Well, in a sense, yes. I knew that I was gonna work at the [Lā'ie] Quarry. 'Cause they was looking for laborers. You sixteen, no problem. That's a law, you know. That's a territory law [allowing sixteen-year-olds to work].

WN: So, you just went down and applied?

JM: Applied, yeah, after I made sixteen. Then I went and applied for the job. I went work right then and there.

(Laughter)

WN: Fifty cents an hour.

JM: Fifty cents an hour. City and County [of Honolulu].

WN: So, this is not [U.S. Army] Corps of Engineers [which at the time was known as U.S. Engineer Department]?

JM: They all came under the corps of engineers. Because we were getting paid by the corps of engineers. Of course, through the city and county. Of course, it's actually the U.S. government, because we eventually came under martial law. When you under martial law, you know, that's it, military government is the boss. Civil government is second in command. They take orders from them. So I worked there, and I didn't work too long because eventually I went to. . . . See, I only worked May, June. I worked one month I think, or maybe less than that.

WN: What did you do?

JM: Pick and shovel at the [Lā'ie] Quarry. And then I transferred over to Kahuku. They had an opening in Kahuku, Marconi Wireless Station at the Kahuku [Airfield]. They were looking for a handyman, guy to---what they call today, custodian. Take care the cars, there were two or three cars, I can recall.

WN: Was it better pay?

JM: Oh, yeah, it was a better pay. My pay went up to seventy-five cents an hour.

WN: When you were working at the quarry, like who else was working there?

JM: There was my friend Herbert Nihipali . . .

WN: Local guys?

JM: Local guys, they all local people.

WN: From the area or from all over?

JM: From the area, from Kahana all the way up to Kahuku. Yeah, we had guys who went quit school from Kahuku, and they went to work. But some of them didn't last too long because they got drafted fast or they went volunteer, see. 'Cause some of them were what, eighteen,

nineteen [years old]. Those are the guys that stayed back (laughs). We had some old guys, you know, in my class, tenth grade. Them guys were seventeen already and eighteen, man. And I'm only, what, fifteen, tenth grade. Eventually they all made out all right, though.

WN: So, didn't have Mainland guys coming in to work quarry or anything?

JM: No, no, strictly all local. Supervisors, workers, all local, yeah. The only Mainland people, I found out, was down when I got transferred to Kahuku [Airfield], Marconi. We still call---we all know it as Marconi Wireless Station on Kahuku base. And well, I got to see some *Haole* faces.

WN: Were they your bosses or. . . .

JM: No, no, they just workers. They just work, they operate the heavy equipment. Then eventually---I didn't work too long, I think I worked there only one month.

WN: Marconi?

JM: Marconi, yeah. And then I moved up. They looking for truck driver. I was able to drive by then. I got my license in July '42, and eventually went to work as a grease monkey, otherwise known as the grease gang to go out and grease all the heavy equipment. Your tractors, your graders, your rollers, turner pulls, and crane and shovels.

WN: This is where?

JM: This is all in Kahuku.

WN: Oh, you still in Kahuku.

JM: Yeah, I'm still in Kahuku. See, I move up fast, man. From the time I went to work in May, May, June, July, within three months I was getting dollar an hour. No, I think seventy-five cents an hour. And then I got transferred, I went from seventy-five [cents] to dollar twenty-six [\$1.26], I think, or something, as a grease monkey, grease gang, you know. Then in '42 I got transferred from Kahuku to Mokulē'ia. And I worked in Mokulē'ia till May of '43, I think.

WN: What were you doing there?

JM: Grease gang, greasing all of the heavy equipment. Same job I was doing, only we were boarding at Camp Erdman.

WN: You said heavy equipment, like for what . . .

JM: Heavy construction equipment.

WN: What were they constructing?

JM: They were building runways. They were building roads.

WN: Up Lā'ie side?

JM: Yeah, at the Kahuku Marconi Wireless Station [i.e., Kahuku Airfield]. And in Mokulē'ia, the same thing. They were building runways and roads. Mainly runways. They took over a portion of that sugarcane field that belonged to Waialua plantation [i.e., Waialua Agricultural Company].

WN: They were also building that Pūpūkea Road, too?

JM: That's where I went, too. When I worked for the city and county in Lā'ie, I not only worked for the quarry, I also had to go up the Pūpūkea trail, the Pūpūkea Road. The road eventually went all the way up to where the Boy Scouts [camp] is. But I think we went further than that but the reason it stopped right there after the war was because the rest is considered the federal reserve. The trail ends---the road ends at the Boy Scout camp up there. But I know during the war it was further than that. (Laughs) That was only for the war purpose, that's why. There weren't too many people living up there. I don't think there were more than five or six houses. That was it. And it wasn't tar, black top. Those days was all dirt, man. The *bugga* rain, good night, you hope that the truck make it up the hill (laughs). And we didn't have all them bumps that they do now, you know, they get bumps and they get that drainage. When that *bugga* rain up there, ho, it's cold in the morning. Get warm in the afternoon, during the day it gets warm, then it gets cold again, before we ready to come back home, you know. We stayed up there about eight to ten hours. And then we come back. As soon as the guys bring the coral rock, they unload the coral, what we do is we chop the coral and smooth it out. And then there's a roller come by and roll. It was nice. I think I went work up there for about a month, 'cause like I say I don't think more than a month in Lā'ie because, boom, I was down to Kahuku next, then, boom, in July I was down in Mokulē'ia next. (Laughs)

WN: All working on the air bases?

JM: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Wasn't that Dillingham[-owned] at that time?

JM: That's right. That was Dillingham at that time. It was called Dillingham. But the place was Camp Erdman. It belonged to the Dillingham family. I never tried to find out why they named the camp [after Erdman].

WN: I think Harold [R.] Erdman, I don't know who he was though. [Harold R. Erdman was a grandson of B. F. Dillingham.]

JM: Could be a relative. But, yeah, we couldn't go swimming because they had barbed wire fence. And you know, you work from dawn to dusk, ten hours a day. And that's seven days a week. But you gotta be real sick, sick (laughs), I mean extremely sick, you know, not to work. Otherwise, boy, you better get on the job. Well, anyhow, when I got my appendicitis removed, I had to quit that job.

WN: They gave you room and board? They gave you meals, too?

JM: Yeah, at Camp Erdman, yeah, meals, everything. They had a nice cafeteria over there.

WN: And it was mostly local, you said?

JM: Oh yeah, majority local people. Not too many---they used to gamble down there. The flyers, GIs, they come back from their mission. Payday, they come. During the summer, the only thing they do is lose their money, man.

WN: Did they let Japanese work over there?

JM: Well, I had two Japanese boys working with me. I was the supervisor. One of them was older than me, but I was bigger.

(Laughter)

JM: And they were my buddies. We all from---they're from Kahuku. They also went quit school.

WN: I'm wondering, the people that worked plantation, that time, some of them, were they able to leave those plantation jobs and go work for defense?

JM: Yeah. They did.

WN: They didn't have to stay on the plantation?

JM: Well, see, that portion I don't know. I think the sons maybe, and the daughters [moved to defense work]. But the parents still stayed [with the plantation], you know. The sons and daughters did, but not the parents.

WN: Oh, I see.

JM: So, it didn't matter, you know, if they wanted to go work. Oh yeah, there's nothing wrong with the children going to work for the defense. They still were able to work at the [Kahuku] Airfield. No big thing. We worked side by side, together.

That's how I knew that one of my buddies, one of the good *Haole* friends I made, the *bugga* turned out to be a FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] agent (laughs). Yeah, and I had to pick him up. I didn't know that, see. After my appendicitis operation, I transferred up to Punahou. [The U.S. Engineer Department occupied the Punahou School campus shortly after the outbreak of World War II.] Again I went back to fifty cents an hour. Anyway, I had this call to go pick him up, dispatch, and I said, "Okay." The name didn't ring a bell at that time, but I don't forget faces. When I went by to pick him up at a certain building up at the Punahou campus—our [motor] pool was right at the campus anyway—I saw him in a nice light gray suit. I look, "Eh, David! (Chuckles) I didn't know you were FBI."

(Laughter)

WN: You mean, he was [once] a worker with you up at Camp Erdman?

JM: No, at Kahuku [Airfield]. He was a grader operator.

WN: So, he was there like undercover or something?

JM: Yeah, he was undercover, checking out all the Japanese.



WN: Oh, very interesting.

JM: Yeah, so I tell him, "Well, now I know. So, what is your evaluation up there about my Japanese friends working over there?"

"Oh, them guys all right. That's why I'm back here, because there's nothing."

"I presume you guys had some guys down Mokulē'ia, eh, where I was working?"

"Oh, yeah, we had two [FBI] guys down there, too. But nothing."

WN: What was he? Was he like a supervisor up there [Kahuku Airfield]?

JM: No, he wasn't, he was just a worker. Oh yeah, they go like [as] plain workers, too, you know. They had to know how to operate that thing.

WN: So, he never said anything to you about being FBI?

JM: No, he never say nothing. 'Cause when I used to come over there and grease his vehicle—he's a grader—I said, "Hi David. Eh, I'm ready to grease your car, your equipment."

"Okay John, stand by."

So, he moved the grader around, so I can get to it, and then I tell him back up. See, I get two Japanese boys with me. Local boy, right from Kahuku, too. I forgot their name, gunfunnit me. That's the trouble, you know. I forget names, but I no forget faces. Anyhow, we grease his equipment. I forgot who the other [*Haole*] guy was, gunfunnit. They never tell me. Well, I could care less, you know. That's none of my business, anyway. Well, at least I knew him [David]. 'Cause he was friendly that's why, see. The other guys, there were couple more *Haole* guys, you know, working heavy equipment. One operate the crane, the other one operate a roller, I think. They no talk too much. Ain't my fault. They no talk too much, I no talk. But David was friendly. Real friendly. Because of his friendliness, I used to bring fruit for him. Just before I went into Mokulē'ia. He was still there when I went to Mokulē'ia. Well, I worked all the way through, from there I went to work at Punahou campus [in 1943].

WN: Before you went to Punahou, you know, things like blackouts you guys had to . . .

JM: Oh yeah, we had blackouts, yes. Windows, all curtains down. You cannot use strong light, so we use *kukui hele pō*, which is the lantern, at home, see. Between the time December 7, we looking at about six months before I quit school, we using lantern at night. Save electricity, eh. And the only time we use electricity is right before blackout. Of course, blackout was early too. Later on blackout became a little bit more lenient, I guess. Of course, I don't remember 'cause I was out, I was in the army then.

WN: Later on.

JM: I remember when the war was over, I was aboard ship the *Evangeline*, when we were halfway between Hawai'i and Palau, the Ulithi Islands, when the war was over. And he remove all the blackout. So used to go in like this, see. Go into the mess hall, and wherever,



you know. All the boards came out. And I hate to say it but, they threw the boards overboard (laughs). They threw 'em overboard, in the ocean.

WN: What were the boards used for?

JM: That was the blackout.

WN: You mean to cover the windows?

JM: See, you know the entrance was like this, eh. So, they blackout over here, they blackout over here, and . . .

WN: The windows you mean?

JM: No, no, the doorways.

WN: Oh.

JM: And what they did was paint the windows, either paint or I don't know, put something. The portholes, they called. I do remember they did have these boards that go like this zigzag, you know, to go into the entrance. And they removed all the boards, and I thought they going save 'em until they get to land. Heck no, they dump that in the ocean. I'm telling you, Americans are terrible. Course, you know, it's none of my business those days, you know. You're only a nineteen-year-old, eh.

WN: So, when you working the quarry, like that, you were only a young kid, eh . . .

JM: Oh yeah, I was only about sixteen.

WN: Were you about the youngest?

JM: No, there were other younger guys than me. Some of them used to work part-time. No, I don't think they were part-time. There was no part-time those days. Not that I recall. But I do recall there was a lot of sixteen-year-olds. Well, like I say, you know, some of them were old already, they just quit school. Some of them were eighteen, seventeen. They never even graduate yet. So they went to work. So, when this war broke out, that was a cream for them.

WN: Let me turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, how were your bosses?

JM: Oh, my bosses were good. All my supervisors, especially my supervisor down at Kahuku [Airfield]. His name was Smith. Used to call him "Snuffy Smith." (Laughs) You know the cartoon character?

WN: Yeah.

JM: He always chewing his tobacco.

WN: He was *Haole*?

JM: Oh, yeah, he was *Haole*. And I thought he was one of them guys, too. But he wasn't. He wasn't FBI.

WN: Did they take any cane out of production or anything like that?

JM: Oh no, the cane production, she went on. Oh yeah, still went on.

WN: They didn't take any cane land to . . .

JM: They did, they had to take some from the—not from Kahuku, not the Kahuku Plantation [Company], well, they might have took a few [acres], but not all. But they did take over the ranch for a while, Kahuku Ranch. I can't recall, 'cause I left home in, what, '42, '43 I left home, and I very seldom came home. I stayed in Honolulu most of the time, 'cause that's where my job was. And when I was in Camp Erdman, you know, that's where I stayed. I came home once in a while. And, '43 I got transferred to . . .

WN: Punahou [School campus, which housed the U.S. Army engineers during World War II].

JM: Punahou.

WN: Okay, how did you get that transfer?

JM: Because I asked for it. Because of my, what do you call . . .

WN: Appendicitis.

JM: My appendicitis. I cannot lift no more.

WN: I see.

JM: Yeah.

WN: So, what kind of job did you have at Punahou?

JM: Well, I was in the sedan pool, I was a driver. And, so I worked there until December . . .

WN: Forty-three?

JM: Forty-three. See, I worked there for a little while, then I got transferred down. They needed a foreman down at the wash rack. Which was Melim station number one [i.e., Melim Service and Supply Company] What is now right across from the [Downtown] post office.

WN: Queen Street?

JM: On Queen Street. I don't know what, that's a new outfit over there, building. I think I see there's a restaurant there. There was an ice cream factory right across the street from Melim, and they called that base yard one, Melim.

WN: So the [U.S.] Army [engineers] took over [Melim Sevice and Supply Company]?

JM: Yeah, the army took over. What they did, mechanic, you know, all the workers down there fix only the military vehicles. Sedan, pickup trucks—those days they didn't have pickups, they had more like weapon carriers. But, they wanted somebody down there to be in charge of the wash rack. And the wash rack had five deaf and dumb; two Korean, three Japanese. So, that means I had to learn the sign language. So, didn't take me long, boom, I got it made, boom like that. Within one week already I was talking to them. I didn't know I had that ability.

WN: Yeah, it's like learning a foreign language.

JM: Yeah, and I was, what, seventeen now. [Nineteen] forty-three, eh. Seventeen years old. I'm a young 'un.

WN: Let me back up. Let me ask you little bit more about Punahou. Where did you live when you . . .

JM: Oh, I lived on Kīna'u Street.

WN: You didn't live on campus then?

JM: No, no, no, no, nobody live on campus. Well, they did have, they had the defense workers, living in one of them dormitories. The whole military took over, they moved Punahou School some other place. I have no idea where they went move them to. But they took over Punahou campus, yeah.

WN: So, what was it like? Did they have like stores and things in there?

JM: No, they didn't. What they had was, oh they had little restaurant, I think. Cafeteria and a snack, you know. Maybe they did have, but I never got to use it because I'm always on the go and us guys we eat outside, see. We order lunch. I don't know if they used to have a lunch wagon come by. We used to send the guys out, just down the road and go pick up lunch, and then come back. And well, I believe in '43 we also had Bob Hope and Langford, I forgot her first name [Frances], and the clown, Corony. All three of them performed as part of the USO [United Service Organizations].

WN: Oh yeah?

JM: Yeah, for the guys up there.

WN: Where at?

JM: At Punahou campus. They set up everything, stage and all. Yeah, I watched it. He [Hope] was a young guy then, comedian, him and his nose.

(Laughter)

JM: His jokes, terrific. And [Frances] Langford, yeah, she sang. Terrific. That's how I remember Bob Hope. I never got to see Bob Hope in Vietnam. He did come but I didn't go.

WN: So, your job was to pick people up?

JM: Yeah, pick up people and take. . . . That's how I knew about Fort Barrette. I had to bring the engineers down. And that's how I got to meet my friend David, find out that the *bugga* was an FBI man. He was up Punahou campus and I had to take him down to the FBI headquarters which was located on Bishop Street. Bishop and right off of Merchant. Merchant is the last [cross] street before what is now called Nimitz [Highway] and part of Ala Moana [Boulevard]. So I worked there [Punahou] and I lived on Kīna'u Street, right below Lusitana. Well, Lusitana ran right into Kīna'u, and of course Alapa'i [Street], and Lunalilo [Street].

WN: How come you wanted to come to Honolulu?

JM: No, I didn't want to come, that's where they transferred me to.

WN: They just transferred you?

JM: Yeah.

WN: Oh, you didn't have any choice?

JM: No, I didn't have any choice because of my ailment. I couldn't lift no more, anything over twenty pounds already.

WN: They didn't have any jobs up in North Shore side?

JM: No, they didn't have any. So what the heck, I might as well go Honolulu. So I went to Honolulu, and I rented this place. I get up in the morning, catch the bus, went to, what do you call . . .

WN: Punahou?

JM: Punahou. See, Punahou was running twenty-four hours a day. So the midnight shift, I get up a certain time of the day, in the morning get ready. Then the guys come by, pick us up. The day drivers come by pick me up [at home]. I didn't have to catch the bus. And that was legal, 'cause that's where they get their workers in fast, they don't have to wait for the bus. Bus take forever and a day to get down here. That was the Nu'uano-Punahou bus. And the bus come right up from King Street or Beretania. Beretania and King Street were both going east and west. Yeah. Anyhow, so I worked there until . . .

WN: So, Punahou had lot of *Haoles* and locals working there?

JM: Majority locals, not too many *Haoles*. The *Haoles* we had was Mr. Wooten. He was the head supervisor for the motor pool, for the sedan pool. But he lived right down the street, 'cause he local boy, too. Yeah, most of the *Haole* civilians, they all local boys, majority. But up in the hall [i.e., dormitory], one of them halls up there, the campus, had all them *Haole* defense

workers, they all come from the Mainland. But none of them work in our sedan pool, we all locals, that's all. In fact, every one of us was local. We had Japanese, Chinese, Puerto Rican, Hawaiian, I'm the only Samoan. And there was my other friend, Logan, I think, Logan worked there too.

WN: You folks drove all over the island?

JM: Yeah, I used to go Wahiawā. Very seldom we went to Kahuku or Lā'ie. There wasn't no reason to go down there. Well, mainly went to Schofield, like that, Wahiawā.

WN: You pick up VIPs?

JM: Oh yeah. Not so much VIPs. What we do is we take—I even gotta pick up gals, man. From Punahou campus take 'em Downtown. 'Cause Downtown get the office, the federal building down there. Take 'em down and wait for them while they do their business, you know. And then wait for them and then *pau*, bring 'em back up. Or else if there's another pickup someplace. . . . See, those days, they didn't have this two-way radio. So, you know, it was hard. When I came out to the country, it's not my duty, it's the passenger's duty. He's responsible to call in, not me (chuckles). I'm just a driver, I pick him up.

One I didn't pick up, it was the same day that I took them down to Fort Barrette, on the way back. Nimitz Highway had three lanes. Right in front or just past Camp Catlin, what is now, you know, the bridge, when you pass the Ke'ehi Lagoon? That DAV [Disabled American Veterans Hall] part, you see the bridge over there?

WN: Yeah, oh, you mean on Nimitz?

JM: Yeah, on Nimitz. I don't remember if that's the regular bridge that was over there. Well, anyway, there was a bridge and that was the old road right into Honolulu, go right into Dillingham [Boulevard]. And I plowed into one guy, I was following too close. The two guys in the back, they didn't get shook up 'cause I was only doing about thirty miles an hour. When I *wen* hit the brake—this was one of the new Fords came out, yeah, they put me on the new Ford. You gotta pump, pump, pump, eh. Me, I went step one time and the *bugga* never catch, man. I tell you, keep on going, the second time, by the time he [i.e., the brakes] caught, boom, I hit the car. There was more damage done to the Ford than the Buick. Oh, 1941 model Buick, yeah. The only damage was his license plate and a little paint job, but my damage cost \$156.

WN: Yeah, but you didn't have to pay it, eh?

JM: Oh no, it followed me all the way while I was in the service, though. I didn't have to pay it.

WN: Oh, it went on your record though?

JM: It went on my record. But I didn't have to pay. And I lost the record, I don't know what happened to it.

WN: What about like ID [identification]? Did you guys have to carry ID around?

JM: Yeah, we had ID.

WN: Badges, too?

JM: Yeah, and our picture taken. Of course, I look like one criminal. Look like one guy from O'ahu Prison. Oh man. Told me, "Eh, how come I no can smile?"

(Laughter)

JM: The guy at the ID place, that was up Punahou. We all had to have, even when I was working the quarry. Every time you gotta change [jobs], your ID gotta show that this is where you work. My last ID was in Kāne'ohe Naval Air [Station]. In 1944, I resigned my job at the [Melim] wash rack.

WN: Yeah, tell me about the wash rack.

JM: Well, after I learned how to speak the [sign] language, all we did was, all the official vehicles that come down [from] where I used to work the sedan pool, like the FBI organization, General Lyman's staff car, they come down and go through the rack. Melim station [i.e., Melim Service and Supply Company] had one of the most up-to-date car wash in Honolulu at that time, prior to the war. And because the government took over [the station under] martial law, they improved the place. Well, everything was on lease anyway.

WN: So, this car wash was on Queen Street and . . .

JM: Yeah, Queen and Alakea.

WN: Alakea, okay.

JM: Queen and Alakea. The [Downtown] post office is right in the front of us. The rear end of the post office is what we looking at from Melim service station.

WN: Right, right, right, okay. So, Melim was on the *makai* side and the post office was on the *mauka* side of Queen.

JM: Right.

WN: Was it a pay increase you got to go work wash rack?

JM: Yes, it was. I got little bit more. From fifty cents I went up to a dollar [an hour]. So, then he wanted to increase my pay to \$1.40. I said, "No way, I'm quitting. This job is killing me. I'm just a young man, I'm only seventeen." [Nineteen] forty-three, I'm seventeen. So, I quit, I went home Lā'ie (chuckles).

WN: Since you were Downtown, there were a lot of activities Downtown, eh, you didn't enjoy that?

JM: Oh, of course I did.

WN: Like what, what was available down there?

JM: Well, you had a nightclub that opened. But blackout, see. Oh, but hot, boy, inside there,



whew!

WN: They had plenty nightclubs?

JM: Not too many, but they had a few. And they had a *māhū* club down at Kalākaua Avenue, run by Lo, Mr. Lo, *Pākē*.

They call that "bottle club." [JM is talking about the Downtown nightclub.] Take your own bottle inside. Coke was fifty cents. Coke, eh, you can get 'em for nickel or dime, but no, they was charging fifty cents over there (laughs).

WN: You weren't underage to go?

JM: You got that right I was underage! But I was big enough to pass. The guy see me coming and then he say, see you later, *brah*. He let me go in. I had no problem, but I didn't take advantage too much, I usually cool it, and even when I went in, I behave myself. I drank moderately, enjoy the music. So, that's what I came in there for, to enjoy the entertainment. I used to watch Genoa Keawe. Linda—I forgot her name, Filipino girl. And I can't recall, Vera, was probably in the Mainland learning to become one of them singers. Anyway, I don't know when she married Akuhead [J. Akuhead Pupule, a.k.a. Hal Lewis], probably after, after the war. But anyhow, there weren't too many [nightclubs]. I wasn't able to attend the "Hawai'i Calls." I don't know if they had it or not.

But I quit [U.S. Army engineers] in 1944, I believe it was in October or November. And I didn't work December, January, February. Finally my dad say, "Son, you better go back work." And all I did was fish. The fish I caught, I sold, and this is how I got by, I got my cigarettes, I got my drinks, I got my clothes.

WN: Where did you sell your fish?

JM: I sell my fish right around Lā'ie, Kahuku, Hau'ula, yeah. Close by.

"Eh, what you got for us, John?"

"Oh, I got *he'e*." I used to use throw net, mostly mullet, *manini*, and only seldom get *uouoa*. I used to walk across to Goat Island, all by myself. And I used to look at the big sharks come by, at the other end of the island, Goat Island. In a sense, I was a loner then, those days, all by myself. All the other guys working, eh. And, those days, you no work boy, they going send the MPs [military police] on you. So before the MPs came, (chuckles) I went work. I caught the transportation to Kāne'ohe [Naval Air Station], eh. So, I went there, I started. The first day I went in, that's the day I started work. There ain't no such thing as coming home, no.

WN: Kāne'ohe was part of [U.S.] Army, still?

JM: No, that's [U.S.] Navy.

WN: Oh, that's the navy.

JM: That was navy.

WN: Before it became marine base [i.e., Kāneʻohe Marine Corps Air Station]?

JM: See, what happened, they swap, eh. During or after the Korean War they swap, Barber's Point Air Marine went to Kāneʻohe and Kāneʻohe came this side, naval base came to Barber's Point. [In 1952, Kāneʻohe Naval Air Station was transferred from navy jurisdiction to marine corps jurisdiction, becoming Kāneʻohe Marine Corps Air Station.]

WN: So, what did you do in Kāneʻohe?

JM: I started out on a degreasing gang. The whole complex is called engine overhaul, but get specific departments. The first department is degreasing. In other words, they get that powerful degrease chemical that removes all foreign particles from the engine parts, and then you wash 'em down with a solvent and then it goes through on the rack, and then it dries up. And then the other guys pick it up and the next department pick it up, from there on. I worked there for a little while. Let's see, I started February '44, March, April, May. I think June, I got an advancement. By June I was in the paint shop. So I worked from June to March of '45 in the paint shop. By that time I was getting \$1.16 an hour.

WN: You know you said you had to quit Melim [i.e., U.S. Army engineers], eh? How come you quit?

JM: I quit because . . .

WN: Too much work or . . .

JM: No, no, the money wasn't sufficient to support myself, see, the boarding room and all that.

WN: You were still living Kīnaʻu Street?

JM: Yeah, I was still living Kīnaʻu Street. Things wasn't too good, anyway. I got to thinking, eh man, I better not sit around this Honolulu, things been getting pretty rough lately.

WN: What do you mean rough?

JM: Well, I don't know. I was the outgoing type, but I'm not the social type, you know, I wasn't too much going out and dancing and all that, and drinking. No way, jack. No, no. So, I went back home [to Lāʻie]. That's the main reason why. There's too much social going on [Downtown]. I didn't care for it. Even after World War II, they used to go down eat, the guys go drink, I go in the bar, I eat all the *pūpū*, and they drink. I don't drink, no way. Maybe I take one or two and that's it, I stop. Yeah, and then I'm eating all the *pūpū*s.

(Laughter)

JM: I make a meal out of *pūpū*. Then when they go eat, I tell, "No, I not hungry, I full already."

(Laughter)

JM: So, I came home, and that's the main reason why I came home.

WN: And you lived at home?

JM: And I lived at home with my mom and dad. Until February, when my dad told me, "Son, it's time for you to go to work." And that was it. So I work up till March of '45. See, 'cause in May I made eighteen, '44 I went down to Waialua local board number three, and the post office and put in for my application, volunteer. And ten months later, which was March '45 I got that letter from President Roosevelt, to report to Schofield [Barracks], yeah. So, that began my [U.S.] Army career.

WN: So, March '45, was that Truman or Roosevelt by then?

JM: No, no, no, it was still Roosevelt.

WN: Still Roosevelt.

JM: Roosevelt.

WN: He died that year, I think.

JM: Yeah, he died in April [1945]. He died the following month. He died while I was in basic [training]. By April, the first week of April, we were already in Texas. You figure from March to April, in three weeks, we were already in Texas, taking basic. Yeah, I think he died April 14 or 15, I forgot. [Franklin D. Roosevelt died April 12, 1945.]

WN: Going into the military was what you wanted to do all that time . . .

JM: All that time, yeah.

WN: From the time you were sixteen?

JM: From that time, yeah, I couldn't wait. The marines and the navy came over my house and my sister told my mother not to sign the paper. I was working.

WN: You couldn't anyway, though, you were underage, right?

JM: That's right. No, but, I wasn't underage for the navy or the marines. I was already old enough, sixteen and a half they were taking 'em.

WN: Oh.

JM: Even when I was seventeen my mother wouldn't sign the paper. 'Cause my sister talk her out of it. The [U.S.] Marine Corps and the [U.S.] Navy.

WN: What did your sister not like about it?

JM: Well, she said, because I'm too young.

WN: (Chuckles) What did you say?

JM: I ain't got nothing to say, *bruddah*. Our older sister, she was a top advisor for my mother, you might say executive, the advisor to the chairman, the chairperson. And that's what she was (laughs). And what she says, Mama went along with the program, as far as me and my

kid brother was concerned.

WN: But once you made eighteen?

JM: Nah, that was it, I was on my own. My mother knew that as soon as I made eighteen I was gonna go. So my mother was all for it. She wanted to sign, you know, but my sister talk her out of it. Yeah, too young and this and that. Tell her all the bad things. Boy, oh boy. Didn't bother me, didn't bother me a bit. I didn't know, see. 'Cause all the time that they came, they talked to my parents, see. They never talked to me. They couldn't talk to me. No way, 'cause I'm working. Only when I come home, then my mother would talk to me. They would tell me about it. Well, when the marine guy came, I didn't hear it till about two months later. I heard it from my other sister (laughs), my other sister here. Yeah, that's why hard, boy. She came down to visit us one time. She was already married, she lived in Honolulu. She came down and visit us, she and her husband. And then she told me, "You know, Mama didn't sign the paper."

"What for, sign what paper?"

"Oh, for you to go to marines."

"I don't want to go in the marines." Well, I didn't care to go to the marines, but the navy was what I wanted. I wanted to go on the ocean, man. I'm a sea-going guy (chuckles). I didn't care for the army or marines. Well, anyhow, so I went basic, '45. And. . . .

WN: By then the war was ending already?

JM: You better believe it! Like I said, the war ended while I was halfway through Ulithi.

WN: How did you feel about that?

JM: I said, "Oh, no, jiminy Christmas." Oh boy. But then, I changed my mind quickly, you know. I said, well, it's nothing wrong, it's okay. So I went to the Philippines. I volunteered couple of times to go pick up the Japanese stragglers, you know. Ho, they all skin and bones. I treat 'em real good. I treat the best I can, as I should as a conqueror to a prisoner, you know. The main thing we had to be real careful about is not leaving 'em alone with the Filipinos. Because of the atrocities that they did during the war. And because I knew a little Japanese, I talk to them. Real little Japanese. But they understood, eh. Of course, they understood, and they talk to me. Some I understand, but some I don't. Because of my learning over here, that's why. 'Cause I used to wait for my buddy Asami Watanabe, from school, *pau* school, regular school, then he gotta go Japanese[-language] school, before the war. So, I wait for him. One hour, man. Sometime I go home, and I tell, "Okay, I'll meet you in an hour, certain-certain place, okay." So, I went home, do my chores, and I meet him certain place. I miss him boy, son of a gun he passed away four years ago. We were very close. His *Haole* name was Albert, but I always used to call him Asami. I see his brother, his brother still driving taxi. He's about sixty-one, now, Hideko. That's the first time I went 'au'au in the *furo*. First time, you know. I just to like go 'au'au over there.

He tell, "Eh, John, come my house and we go 'au'au."

"Okay." (Laughs)

Good fun, boy, kids, eh. I really enjoyed it. He's one of the closest Japanese friend I had. Growing up together. Going to school, elementary, all the way up to high school, and then the war. He graduated, then he came in. But he sat in only for little while, then he worked as a federal employee in the fire department. And he retired, he retired as a [fire] fighter. And he didn't last long, four years later, he was dead. Oh my. We both the same age. I think I'm a little---I think two months older than him, that's all.

WN: So, you became a career soldier, then?

JM: Yeah, from then on I got to thinking, well, I want to go home. So, I re-upped for the [U.S. Army] Air Corps. In October '45 I re-upped for the air corps, in the Philippines, and I said to myself, well, no way I going carry this gun for the rest of my life. But actually, I wouldn't be carrying any gun because I was in the quartermaster. I should have just re-upped for the quartermaster. But then again, because I was in the quartermaster, army, I didn't have to go Korea when the Korean War broke out. But then again, I volunteered to go Korea, they wouldn't send me. Twice I volunteered for the Korean War, they wouldn't send me. Because I guess, they went on the basis that I was the only child in my family. I know they got my application. So, that was it, I didn't go Korea till it was over. Anyway, I re-upped for the air corps in '45 and the [U.S.] Air Force became its own in 1947 when I was stationed on Guam. I spent two years on Guam. Philippines, I stayed September, October, November, December, January, only four or five months, yeah. But I was able to talk Tagalog. Oh, it didn't take me long, only about a week or so. It was pretty easy. And even at that time I didn't know that I had a gift of tongue. And I spoke without accent, even when I'm on the telephone. I talk Japanese, the guy don't know I'm Samoan talking Japanese. Even when I was in Okinawa, or even today. You know, I talk to a Japanese and his back is to me, and he turn around and look at me, he be shock because, eh, no accent.

(Laughter)

JM: Anyhow, so I was able to get by with myself in the Philippines. So I even went as far as to learn how to sing some of the songs.

Well, after that I came home. What decided me to stay in, was when they had that Berlin air lift, in 1948. That's what decided me to stay in. The air lift was over. But in a sense it was a beginning, that gave me the thought to re-up again. And I re-upped again in '49. On the eighty-fifth day of my civilian life. I was out eighty-five days and on that day I went back and re-upped.

WN: How come?

JM: 'Cause I couldn't get no job. My brother wanted to use his influence. Well, I wasn't coming with that baloney. You know what I mean? I ain't coming with that, you know, it's who you know. I figure I do it on my own, eh. Well, my sister received a letter from the [Honolulu] Police Department, calling me for interview. Well, at that age of the game, at that stage and that age, and you know, I just had my military experience, they ain't gonna turn me down 'cause those *buggas* are hurting. I knew I'd be a policeman. But I didn't know that until ten years later. My sister went and told my mother what's happening and then she, both, they hide the letter. Knowing the fact that if I don't get no call from the fire department or the police department, I'm gonna go back [into the military]. And so, I didn't get nothing, so I said, that's it, my time is up. So, I re-upped, on the eighty-fifth day. And I didn't know until



ten years later that my sister held up this police department interview.

WN: So, you could have been a policeman, by now, till today?

JM: That's right. I'd be retired already.

WN: Retired policeman.

JM: That's right. And I wouldn't be a policeman on the block. No highway patrol, things like that. No, I'd be administrative. 'Cause I'm too goody-goody that's why. I mean you know, I could never be. . . . 'Cause I was an MP [military police], before I went quartermaster, I was an MP, you know, in the Philippines. Yeah, I forgot about that. I was an MP, the 328 Battalion. And I was in one of the company. And they the meanest guys in the Philippines, man. Well, me and my partner we go out in Manila town and we walk for four hours, you know, four-hour beat. He come back with fifteen or sixteen tickets. I come back with only four. And the sergeant at the desk would say, "Eh, how come you only get four and your partner. . . ."

"Well, you look what he got and look what I got."

My partner got all kind, "no button, cap crooked, button unbuttoned, the sleeve, zipper, belt," you know. All those little . . .

WN: *Manini* stuff.

JM: *Manini* stuff. So compared to mine, eh, mine get "no hat, had no hat on the head," and the other one would be "two sleeves rolled up." You not supposed to have your sleeves rolled up, man, you gotta have 'em buttoned. Now, if you have one sleeve that's unbuttoned, I tell 'em, "Eh, you better button 'em." And that's it, let it go. I could care less, you know. But no, when the guy got two sleeves rolled up, man, that's time for ticket, yeah. And I can't recall the other two. But mine was never *manini* kind, man. Mine was strictly out of uniform, 100 percent out of uniform, yeah. Anyhow, I didn't last too long. Two to three weeks, boom, they ship me out. They check my form-twenty file. Oh, I used to be a truck driver during the war and a painter. So the best place for a guy like that is quartermaster. So, they send me to quartermaster. So, when I re-upped in October, yeah, it didn't take long, man. I landed there September 30, we landed there. Went to the MP October, two weeks in October, no, one week, one week I stay in the outfit, boom, they ship me out. That was it. Then I went quartermaster. So, I re-upped and I quartermaster October 25.

WN: This is still army, eh?

JM: Yeah, still the army.

WN: So the air corps . . .

JM: Then I went re-upped for the air corps October 25.

WN: Nineteen forty-nine?

JM: Nineteen forty-five.



WN: Nineteen forty-five.

JM: Yeah, that's the air corps, U.S. [Army] Air Corps.

WN: Part of the army still?

JM: That, part of the army, still the army. Yeah, and then 1947, the air corps became its own through the National Security Act, which was passed by [Harry] Truman. Truman was president. [The U.S. Air Force was established under the Armed Services Unification Act of July 26, 1947.]

WN: Air corps became [U.S.] Air Force?

JM: Air corps became air force.

WN: You transferred with them?

JM: Yeah.

WN: Oh, so you became air force.

JM: Yeah, I just stayed the same. They just changed the name. The name was changed, that's all. Nobody moved no place, yeah. Maybe the higher-ups did, but not the low ranking.

WN: So, you served until when?

JM: Till '48.

WN: Forty-eight.

JM: Then I went out.

WN: Then you came back.

JM: I came back, re-upped again '49. And I stayed till I retired.

WN: You retired in '72?

JM: Seventy-two, yeah.

WN: And you lived over here?

JM: Yeah. I went through all the crisis, Korean, Berlin, Cuba. I smiling, because when [John F.] Kennedy called his bluff, Nikita, what?

WN: Khrushchev?

JM: Khrushchev, yeah, in '62.

WN: The Cuban missile crisis, right?

JM: I was on alert. I was stationed at Morocco when that happened. Nobody went off base. We sent all the Moroccans home. The only guys on base, was strictly the military [personnel] and their dependents. Till the crisis was over and then they came back to work.

WN: Let me change tape.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-48-2-92; SIDE ONE

WN: Remember I asked you during the interview, you know, when you quit school, would you have done that if the war was not going on? I was just wondering, if you could just kind of think, if the war never started, what do you think would have happened with you?

JM: Well, like I say, I would have eventually gone on to University of Hawai'i. And who knows from there. It depends, I guess, eventually, most likely, I would have become a lawyer. (Laughs) Either that or I would have become a linguist. I could have gone either field, eh. But in my younger days in the service, I used to get myself in trouble and get myself out of it. More time as not (chuckles).

WN: Do you regret your decision to quit school?

JM: No, no, I don't regret, because eventually I knew that I will get my diploma. And I did, 1960, I went back to education department in the air force. I was stationed at that time in Idaho, and I continued to attend the classes, which is called a GED, eh. And eventually I passed it, and they sent my passing grades, the equivalent anyway, to my school, Kahuku. And when I came back I had an equivalent of a tenth grade. So, with that equivalent, I figured, well, I better hang on, wait till I retire. So when I retired [in 1972] I went to school. I went to Leeward Community College. I took all my electives and not so much requirements, you know. I had requirements, but I eventually decided after three years over there, I went to KCC [Kapi'olani Community College] to work on my major. My major was hotel operations with management. Well, I didn't do so good, the first time. I needed an average grade of 2.5, I had only a 2.4. So, I figure, well, I better try one more time. At that time the VA [Veterans Administration] would let you do it, see. You can't do that now. So, I figure, well, I better study more hard now. So, I did. So I ended up with a 3.0. And I graduated. In '77, I got my A.S. [associate of science] degree. A.S. degree in hotel mid-management. Then I sat out one semester, '77, spring of '78 I went back.

I didn't go to school until '73. August of '73 I went to Leeward.

WN: Right after you retired?

JM: I retired a year before.

WN: Seventy-two, right?

JM: A year before, and in between that I was doing odd jobs. And retirement [pay] was low then. I only had about \$300 a month. My house payment was only \$124. So, I was working odd

jobs. Anyhow, I decided, well, might as well go school and see what happens. Course, when I went school I got all that VA benefits. The reason I went back in '78 in spring, they raised their tuition up for the VA, disabled, see. Then I was, I was at that time 60 percent. So, I went back to school to get the other portion of the hotel business, which is the food service. Well, I didn't complete it. I needed two more courses. Godfunnit, oh boy. 'Cause my time ran out. My [VA] privileges ran out in '79. So, I had to go to work. So I worked civil service down here, Barber's Point, communications center. I worked there for nine years and I retired. I retired under their system. Five consecutive years in sixty and over, the age for retirement. So, I was sixty-two when I retired. I had nine years with the civil service, plus I had three and a half during the martial law during World War II [with the U.S. Army engineers], Hawai'i. So, they gave me twelve-and-a-half [years] and that's it.

WN: How did you meet your wife?

JM: I met her in a bakery shop. My niece was working. My niece wrote to me and told me about her, when I was in Korea. Went to Korea '53, yeah, I stayed there one year. Actually I stayed there only ten, eleven months, 'cause I spend one month (chuckles) at home. 'Cause, you know, no big thing.

WN: Nobody objected to Hawaiian marrying Samoan?

JM: No. See, by then, you know, my time, you don't want to marry your own kind 'cause you don't know if you're related. So you marry the other Polynesian group or another one. *Haole*, Japanese, *Pāke*, whatever, but never another Samoan. And that's true, you know. Even the Hawaiians, of course some Hawaiians don't know, you know, they marry Hawaiians, but that's all right. But there's fear of, eh, they blood related. That's not too good, but what the heck, they used to do it. Brother used to marry sister. And all their royalty, you know, those days even the Samoans used to do it, too. All the Polynesians did it. You better believe it. That's the reason why they call 'em Polynesians. You know what "poly" means, eh? You better believe it (laughs). It come from the word polygamist. You better believe it. So, you never can tell. Anyhow, yeah, when I think about Polynesian, I gotta laugh, you know, as I got older, you know.

WN: You know, as a Samoan, born and raised here, you know, your parents were one of the first, early Samoans to come here. And now, especially since [1960s], plenty Samoans are coming in, living in Hawai'i, how do you feel about that?

JM: Well, the only thing I feel about it, is that, well, I like them to learn our ways. Learn that they're not in Samoa anymore. They can keep their culture, but by golly, they gotta change their attitude about taking other people's things that don't belong to them. And it's a next-door neighbor, and especially when they ask for something, take only what you want for and don't take the whole thing. Come over here get a mango, you know, they clean up the mango tree. Green and all, you know, jiminy Christmas. But like I say, to them, there is no tomorrow, some of them. They think they still back home. The law no mean nothing to them here. Well, they crazy. But I don't know, I wish I was able to speak fluent Samoan, godfunnit, I can't. I don't know too much. I can't understand some of the Samoan words that they speak sometime. As I listen to them, I can understand, most likely I can interpret maybe about 60 percent of what they say, not all. So, I have a little bit downfall, yeah.

WN: Well, it's like me and Japanese. Same thing.

JM: One just has to go and live where your home[land] is, where your parents come from, at least one year, so you can understand, fully, how to speak the language and know what it means. 'Cause they got two different classes over there in Samoa, now. They say they don't, they lot of baloney, I know they do. Yeah. Because Western Samoa still has the *matai* system, see. And the *matai* means, they get one head and he's the main one that distribute all the goodies to the different families within that group, within that *'ohana*, man, that's it. Well, that's what the Hawaiians are trying to do again. Well, I hope they don't go that way 'cause that's wrong, man. They don't know it, but that's what they're heading for. I don't say too much about it, but this seems like they [Samoans] not too interested in education, not too many of them. Few of 'em do. I would say, of the Samoans that came here, those that came in the '50s, right after the Korean War or during the Korean War, they are well versed in the way of Hawai'i *nei*. And the constitution of the United States, they. . . . But those that came after the Vietnamese War, oh my goodness, that's a big flop.

WN: Why, what is the difference?

JM: The difference is that some of them are in the jail house. And well, they didn't learn anything from the Samoans that came here.

WN: These are those that came after '65?

JM: Yeah, oh yeah. These came after '65. These are all, the majority, well, I can't say majority, I say about, 10 or 20 percent of them are troublemakers. Especially the generation, the young boys and the young girls, they seem like they it, you know. Especially if they big, man. And that's bad. And one example is the boy who wrestling. He'll never make it. He'll never make it, because his attitude is bad. He got a bad attitude in that Japanese culture. You gotta learn, you know, you got to be humble. But there's no humbleness in that Samoan boy. Oh, the mother and dad are proud, I don't know what they proud about. They don't want to admit that he has a fault.

So, the majority of the Samoans, I'm happy for them to come here. Only thing is we don't have enough counselors. And if we do have counselors, they not too well versed in the American system. They still try to fall back on their own system, and that's not too good. Hanneman is my nephew. Or you can say third cousin by---we're blood-related. Mufi Hanneman. And all the rest of his brothers and sisters. Mufi is good. Mufi is good because he speak their language, he understand. He don't speak it too much, but he's a good counselor. But there ain't too many guys like him. You don't have enough of that. My friend Neff [Maiava] would have been a good one. But he clown too much. He don't mean it, you know, but he clowns too much. He's older than I am, about two, three years older than me. But we get along real fine. He calls me, sometime I call him, you know. How you doing? How your day? Checking up on each other, making sure we still kicking (chuckles) since we past our sixty-fifth birthday already.

But I still believe that the Samoan community has done pretty good. Of course, there's a few of them, those in the jail house, I'm sorry, you know, jiminy Christmas. See, one thing I like about the Samoans, they got a strict discipline. But sometime, that discipline go beyond reasons (chuckles). Especially if you do something real bad. But their discipline I don't take it away. The old style, use the brush, use the stick, and the Samoans still do. As far as I'm concerned that's all right with me. You better believe it, because I'm telling you, some of this generation kids boy, you gotta pound 'em in the head. So they can straighten up and fly right.

But other than that, I'm all for the Samoans coming over here, but I want them, you know, they come here they gotta change their attitude. And they gotta leave that *matai* system at home, back where it belongs in Samoa, not over here. They try to apply it here, see. And of course, there's a difference between the Samoans that come here and the Samoans that come from Lā'ie, because we are two different religions, that's why. They got the Catholic Samoans, the Baptist Samoans. They got the, I don't know if they got Jehovah, too. But then again, the LDS [Latter-Day Saints], the Mormons, we different. But when they get together, they all right, up to a point.

WN: So there are basic philosophical differences between Samoans who are Mormons and non-Mormon Samoans. Differences in where they come from, too, the background or the discipline?

JM: No, the background they get is still the same. It's just that we have two different beliefs here. But when they have festivities going together, you know, they both attend. Like the Samoan Day they have every year at Ke'ehi Lagoon. They all come, they all join in. The Latter-Day Saints, all the Samoans from all over, they come and participate. So far so good. See, Samoans, some of them, they don't want to lose, you know, they don't want to lose. They want to win all the time. And if they lose, oh man, that's it, that's trouble already. They find something to. . . . But I don't know, maybe this generation, maybe it's different. But the old generation, oh yeah, they don't like to lose. But they all right. I think each generation is little better. 'Cause last I heard, they had the Samoan Day at Ke'ehi Lagoon, there was no trouble. That's good. The only time they have no trouble is if they don't drink liquor, beer especially, or hard liquor. 'Cause sometime they act like a bunch of Indians. And no offense against my Indian friends.

The only thing that cracks me up is, I love my Samoan brothers, you better believe it, but sometimes I gotta turn my head, man, and walk the other way because I don't want to see what they're doing. And only the law can handle that. And I've been brought up to leave well enough alone, sometimes. But when it comes to the Samoans, I don't usually pin 'em down too much. I watch what I say to them because I can't say the same thing I could say to the Hawaiian or to the Japanese or the *Haole* like I would to the Samoan. Because of their inferiority complex. Some of them get angry fast for no reason at all, sometime. But some of them are cool, but you ain't gonna find too many of them, cool headed. So, when I was among the Samoans, I watch what I say. Even though I'm the oldest in the group, and they respect me, but that's it. As long as I don't rile them up (laughs). But they could care less, yeah. I'm telling you, this generation, terrible now.

So, other than that I'm glad to see the Samoans are here now. And I think the majority of them are doing all right except for a few. Every now and then they have a little. . . . So far I haven't heard no hassle from Kūhiō [Park] Terrace, yet. So far it's been good. And I hope they keep it up that way. Of course majority [living] over there is all Samoans, man. If not majority, I would say about 40 percent is Samoans over there. Some of them are just satisfied with what they have at the present, and for tomorrow, each day. Well, their philosophy is all right, in a sense.

WN: Okay, well, I'm ready to turn this off. Do you have any last things you want to say about your life?

JM: If I live another ten years, I'll be happy. If I live another twenty I'll be more than happy.



Then you come back and interview me again.

WN: Okay.

JM: Ten years from today. In fact, come on my birthday month. Yeah, ten or five years. Let's make it five years.

WN: Five years, okay.

JM: Five years, 1997.

WN: Okay, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW



# **AN ERA OF CHANGE**

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### **Volume I**

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